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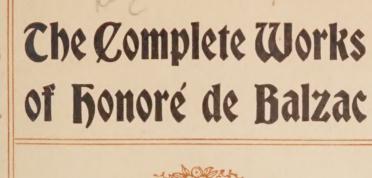
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The Dramas



Colonial Press Company

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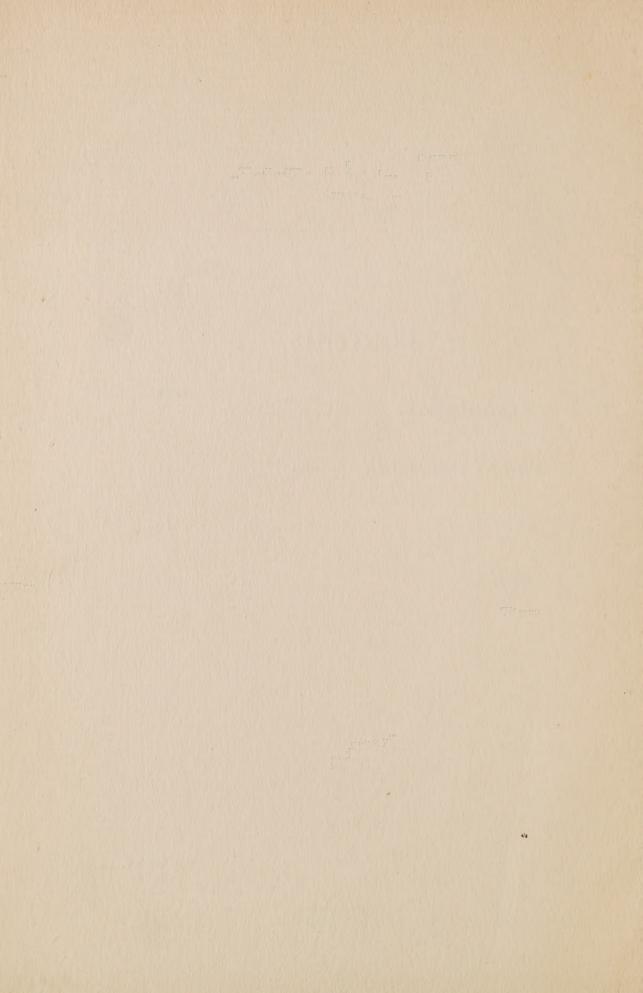
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# INTRODUCTION

La Marâtre (The Stepmother) is characterized as an "intimate" drama in five acts and eight tableaux. It was first presented at the Théâtre-Historique, Paris, May 25, 1848. Its publication, by Michel Lévy in the same year, was in brochure form. The time is just a little later than that of Pamela Giraud, and one similar motif is found in the Napoleonic influence still at work for years after Waterloo. Though this influence is apparently far beneath the surface, and does not here manifest itself in open plottings, it is nevertheless vital enough to destroy the happiness of a home when mixed in the mortar of a woman's jealousy. The action is confined to a single château in Normandy. A considerable psychological element is introduced. The play is a genuine tragedy, built upon tense, striking lines. It is strong and modern enough to be suitable, with some changes, for our present day stage. The day of the playwright's immaturity (noticed in the three preceding plays) is past. With this, as with all of Balzac's work, he improved by slow, laborious plodding, gaining experience from repeated efforts until success was attained.

In his dramas he was not to succeed at the first trial, nor the second, nor the third. But here at the fourth he has nearly grasped the secret of a successful play. While at the fifth—Mercadet—we are quite ready to cry "Bravo!" Who knows, if he had lived longer (these plays were written in the last years of their author's life), to what dramatic heights Balzac might have attained!

To Mercadet then we turn for the most striking example of the playwright's powers. This first appeared as Le Faiseur (The Speculator), being originally written in 1838-40. Justice compels us to state, however, that another hand is present in the perfected play. In the original it was a comedy in five acts; but this was revamped and reduced to three acts by M. d'Ennery, before its presentation at the Gymnase Théâtre, August 24, 1851. It was then re-christened Mercadet, and took its place as a 12mo brochure in the "Theatrical Library" in the same year. The original five-act version was first published as Mercadet, in Le Pays, August 28, 1851 (probably called forth by the presentation of the play four days earlier), and then appeared in book form, as Le Faiseur, from the press of Cadot, in 1853. It is of interest to note that the play was not presented till over a year subsequent to Balzac's death. The presented version in three acts has generally been regarded as the more acceptable, M. de Lovenjoul, the Balzacian commentator, recognizing its superior claims. It is the form now included in current French editions, and the one followed in the present volume.

Although Mercadet, like the others, excited the ridicule of supercilious critics, it has proven superior to them and to time. As early as the year 1869, the Comédie Française—the standard French stage—added Mercadet to its repertory; and more than one company in other theatres have scored success in its representation. The play contains situations full of bubbling humor and biting satire. Its motif is not sentiment. Instead, it inveighs against that spirit of greed and lust for gain which places a money value even upon affection. But during all the arraignment, Balzac, the born speculator, cannot conceal a sympathy for the wily Mercadet

while the promoter's manœuvres to escape his creditors must have been a recollection in part of some of Balzac's own pathetic struggles. For, like Dumas père, Balzac was never able to square the debit side of his books—be his income never so great. The author of César Birotteau and Le Maison Nucingen here allows one more view of the seamy side of business.

Structurally, too, the play is successful. With so great an element of chance in the schemes of the speculator, it would have been easy to transcend the limits of the probable. But the author is careful to maintain his balances. Situation succeeds plot, and catastrophe situation, until the final moment when the absconding partner actually arrives, to the astonishment of Mercadet more than all the rest. And with Mercadet's joyful exclamation, "I am a creditor!" the play has reached its logical final curtain.

J. WALKER McSpadden.



# THE STEPMOTHER

# A DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS

Presented for the First Time in Paris, at the Théâtre-Historique, May 25, 1848.



### PERSONS OF THE PLAY

COMTE DE GRANDCHAMP, a Napoleonic General.

Eugène Ramel, a State's Attorney.

FERDINAND MARCANDAL.

DOCTOR VERNON.

GODARD.

AN INVESTIGATING MAGISTRATE.

Felix, servant to Général de Grandchamp.

CHAMPAGNE, a foreman.

BAUDRILLON, a druggist.

Napoleon, son to Général de Grandchamp by his second wife.

GERTRUDE, second wife to Général de Grandchamp.

PAULINE, daughter to Général de Grandchamp by his first wife.

MARGUERITE, maid to Pauline.

GENDARMES, SHERIFF'S OFFICER, THE CLERGY.

Scene: Château of the Général de Grandchamp, near Louviers, Normandy. Time: 1829.



### THE STEPMOTHER

ACT I.

#### SCENE FIRST.

(A richly decorated drawing-room; on the walls are portraits of Napoleon I. and his son. The entry is by a large double glass door, which opens on a roofed veranda and leads by a short stairway to a park. The door of Pauline's apartments are on the right; those of the General and his wife are on the left. On the left side of the central doorway is a table, and on the right is a cabinet. A vase full of flowers stands by the entrance to Pauline's room. A richly carved marble mantel, with a bronze clock and candelabras, faces these apartments. In the front of the stage are two sofas, one on the left, the other on the right. Gertrude enters, carrying the flowers which she has just plucked, and puts them in the vase.)

# GERTRUDE AND THE GENERAL.

# GERTRUDE

I assure you, my dear, that it would be unwise to defer any longer giving your daughter in marriage. She is now twenty-two. Pauline has been very slow in making her choice; and, in such a case, it is the duty of parents to see that their children are settled. Moreover, I am very much interested in her.

THE GENERAL

In what way?

#### GERTRUDE

The position of a stepmother is always open to suspicion; and for some time it has been rumored in Louviers that I am the person who throws obstacles in the way of Pauline's marriage.

#### THE GENERAL

That is merely the idle gossip of little towns. I should like to cut out some of those silly tongues. And to think that they should attack you of all people, Gertrude, who have been a real mother to Pauline—whom you have educated most excellently!

### GERTRUDE

It is the way of the world! They will never forgive us for living so close to the town, yet never entering it. The society of the place revenges itself upon us for slighting it. Do you think that our happiness can escape envy? Even our doctor—

### THE GENERAL

Do you mean Vernon?—

# GERTRUDE

Yes, Vernon is very envious of you; he is vexed to think that he has never been able to inspire any woman with such affection as I have for you. Moreover, he pretends that I am merely playing a part,—as if I could do it for twelve years! Rather unlikely, I should think.

# THE GENERAL

No woman could keep up the pretence for twelve years without being found out. The idea is absurd! and Vernon also is—

#### GERTRUDE

Oh, he is only joking! And so, as I told you before, you had better see Godard. I am astonished that he has not yet

arrived. He is so rich that it would be folly to refuse him. He is in love with Pauline, and although he has his faults, and is somewhat provincial, he is quite able to make her happy.

### THE GENERAL

I have left Pauline quite free to choose a husband for herself.

#### GERTRUDE

There is no cause for anxiety. A girl so gentle, so well brought up, so well behaved, is sure to do right.

### THE GENERAL

Gentle, did you say? She is headstrong, like her father.

### GERTRUDE

She, headstrong? And you, come now, do you not always act as I wish?

# THE GENERAL

You are an angel, and always wish what pleases me! By the bye, Vernon takes dinner with us after his autopsy.

# GERTRUDE

Was it necessary to tell me that?

# THE GENERAL

I only told you, in order that he might have his favorite wines.

FELIX (enters, announcing),

Monsieur de Rimonville!

THE GENERAL

Ask him in.

Gertrude (making a sign to Felix to arrange the vase of flowers)

I will go to Pauline's room, while you are talking business. I should like to superintend the arrangement of her toilet. Young people do not always understand what is most becoming to them.

### THE GENERAL

She has no expense spared her! During the last eighteen months her dress has cost twice as much as it previously did; after all, poor girl, it is the only amusement she has.

### GERTRUDE

How can you say it is her only amusement while she has the privilege of living with us! If it were not my happy lot to be your wife, I should like to be your daughter. I will never leave you, not I! Did you say for the last eighteen months? That is singular! Well, when I come to think of it, she has begun to care more about laces, jewels, and other pretty things.

# THE GENERAL

She is quite rich enough to indulge her tastes.

# GERTRUDE

And she is now of age. (Aside) Her fondness of dress is the smoke. Can there be any fire? (Exit.)

# SCENE SECOND.

# THE GENERAL (alone)

What a pearl among women! Thus I am made happy after twenty-six campaigns, a dozen wounds, and the death of an angel, whose place she has taken in my heart; truly a kind Providence owed me some such recompense as this, if it were only to console me for the death of the Emperor.

### SCENE THIRD.

GODARD AND THE GENERAL.

GODARD (entering)

Well, General!

### THE GENERAL

Ah! good day, Godard! I hope you are come to spend the day with us?

#### GODARD

I thought perhaps I might spend the week, General, if you should regard favorably the request which I shall venture to make of you.

# THE GENERAL

Go in and win! I know what request you mean—My wife is on your side. Ah, Godard, you have attacked the fortress at its weak point!

# GODARD

General, you are an old soldier, and have no taste for mere phrases. In all your undertakings you go straight ahead, as you did when under fire.

# THE GENERAL

Straight and facing the whole battery.

#### GODARD

That suits me well, for I am rather timid.

You! I owe you, my dear friend, an apology; I took you for a man who was too well aware of his own worth.

#### GODARD

You took me to be conceited! But General, as a matter of fact, I intend to marry because I don't know how to pay my court to women.

# THE GENERAL (aside)

What a civilian! (Aloud) How is this? You talk like an old man, and—that is not the way to win my daughter.

#### GODARD

Do not misunderstand me. I have a warm heart; I wish only to feel sure that I shall be accepted.

### THE GENERAL

That means that you don't mind attacking unwalled towns.

# GODARD

That is not it at all, General. You quite alarm me with your banter.

# THE GENERAL

What do you mean then?

# GODARD

I understand nothing about the tricks of women. I know no more when their yes means no, than when their no means yes; and when I am in love, I wish to be loved in return.

# THE GENERAL (aside)

With such ideas as those he has precious little chance.

#### GODARD

There are plenty of men like me, men who are supremely bored by this little warfare of manners and whims.

### THE GENERAL

But there is something also delightful in it,—I mean in the feminine show of resistance, which gives one the pleasure of overcoming it.

### GODARD

Thank you, nothing of that sort for me! When I am hungry, I do not wish to coquette with my soup. I like to have things decided, and care very little how the decision is arrived at, although I do come from Normandy. In the world, I see coxcombs who creep into the favor of women by saying to them, "Ah! madame, what a pretty frock you have on. Your taste is perfect. You are the only person who could wear that," and starting from such speeches as that they go on and on—and gain their end. They are wonderful fellows, upon my honor! I don't see how they reach success by such idle talk. I should beat about the bush through all eternity before I could tell a pretty woman the effect she has made on me.

# THE GENERAL

The men of the Empire were not of that sort.

# GODARD

It is on account of that, that I put on a bold face! This boldness when backed by an income of forty thousand francs is accepted without protest, and wins its way to the front. That is why you took me for a good match. So long as there are no mortgages on the rich pasture lands of the Auge Valley, so long as one possesses a fine château, well furnished—for my wife need bring with her nothing but her trousseau, since she will find there even the cashmeres and laces of my late mother—when a man has all that, General, he has got all the

courage he need have. Besides, I am now Monsieur de Rimonville.

THE GENERAL

No, you're only Godard.

GODARD

Godard de Rimonville.

THE GENERAL

Godard for short.

GODARD

General, you are trying my patience.

### THE GENERAL

As for me, it would try my patience to see a man, even if he were my son-in-law, deny his father; and your father, a right honest man, used himself to drive his beeves from Caen to Poissy, and all along the road was known as Godard—Father Godard.

GODARD

He was highly thought of.

# THE GENERAL

He was, in his own class. But I see what's the matter; as his cattle provided you with an income of forty thousand francs, you are counting upon other animals to give you the name of De Rimonville.

### GODARD

Now come, General, you had better consult Mlle. Pauline; she belongs to her own epoch—that she does. We are now in the year 1829 and Charles X. is king. She would sooner hear the valet call out, as she left a ballroom, "the carriage of Madame de Rimonville," than, "the carriage of Madame Godard."

Well, if such silliness as this pleases my daughter, it makes no difference to me. For, after all, you would be the one they'd poke fun at, my dear Godard.

#### GODARD

De Rimonville.

### THE GENERAL

Godard, you are a good fellow, you are young, you are rich, you say that you won't pay your court to women, but that your wife shall be the queen of your house. Well, if you gain her consent you can have mine; for bear in mind, Pauline will only marry the man she loves, rich or poor. There may be one exception, but that doesn't concern you. I would prefer to attend her funeral rather than take her to the registry office to marry a man who was a son, grandson, brother, nephew, cousin or connection of one of the four or five wretches who betrayed—you know what my religion is—

### GODARD

Betrayed the Emperor. Yes, everyone knows your creed, General.

# THE GENERAL

God, first of all; then France or the Emperor—It is all the same to me. Lastly, my wife and children! Whoever meddles with my gods becomes my enemy; I would kill him like a hare, remorselessly. My catechism is short, but it is good. Do you know why, in the year 1816, after their cursed disbanding of the army of the Loire, I took my little motherless child and came here, I, colonel of the Young Guard, wounded at Waterloo, and became a cloth manufacturer of Louviers?

### GODARD

I suppose you didn't wish to hold office under them.

No, because I did not wish to die as a murderer on the scaffold.

#### GODARD

What do you mean?

### THE GENERAL

If I had met one of those traitors, I should have finished his business for him. Even to-day, after some fifteen years, my blood boils if I read their names in the newspaper or any one mentions them in my presence. And indeed, if I should meet one of them, nothing would prevent me from springing at his throat, tearing him to pieces, strangling him—

#### GODARD

You would do right. (Aside) I must humor him.

#### THE GENERAL

Yes, sir, I would strangle him! And if my son-in-law were to ill-treat my dear child, I would do the same to him.

# GODARD

Ah!

# THE GENERAL

I shouldn't wish him to be altogether under her thumb. A man ought to be king in his own house, as I am here.

Godard (aside)

Poor man! How he deceives himself!

THE GENERAL

Did you speak?

# GODARD

I said, General, that your threat had no terrors for me! When one has nothing but a wife to love, he loves her well.

Quite right, my dear Godard. And now with regard to the marriage settlement?

GODARD

Oh, yes!

THE GENERAL

My daughter's portion consists of-

GODARD

Consists of—

### THE GENERAL

It comprises her mother's fortune and the inheritance of her uncle Boncoeur. It will be undivided, for I give up my rights to it. This will amount to three hundred and fifty thousand francs and a year's interest, for Pauline is twentytwo.

# GODARD

This will make up three hundred and sixty-seven thousand five hundred francs.

THE GENERAL

No.

GODARD

Why not?

THE GENERAL

It will be more!

GODARD

More?—

# THE GENERAL

Four hundred thousand francs. (Godard seems aston-ished.) I make up the difference! But when I die there will be nothing more coming to her. Do you understand?

#### GODARD

I do not understand.

### THE GENERAL

I am very much attached to little Napoleon.

#### GODARD

You mean the young Duke of Reichstadt?

### THE GENERAL

No, my son whom they would enter in the register only under the name of Leon; but I had inscribed here (he places his hand upon his heart) the name of Napoleon! Do you see I must provide for him and his mother.

# GODARD (aside)

Especially for his mother; she'll take care of that!

# THE GENERAL

What are you saying? If you don't agree with me, out with it!

# GODARD (aside)

If I did so, we should find ourselves in the law courts. (Aloud) I agree, and will back you in everything, General.

# GENERAL

Good for you! And I'll tell you why, my dear Godard.

### GODARD

De Rimonville.

# THE GENERAL

Godard, I prefer Godard. I'll tell you why. After having commanded the grenadiers of the Young Guard, I, Général Comte de Grandchamp, now weave the cloth for their uniforms.

#### GODARD

That is very commendable! You should keep on storing up, General, so that your widow may not be left without a fortune.

THE GENERAL

She is an angel, Godard!

GODARD

De Rimonville.

### THE GENERAL

Godard, she is an angel, to whom you are indebted for the education of your intended, whom she has moulded after her own image. Pauline is a pearl, a jewel; she has never left this home; she is as pure and innocent as she was in her cradle.

#### GODARD

General, let me admit that Mlle. Pauline is beautiful!

### THE GENERAL

I am quite sure of that.

# GODARD

She is very beautiful; but there are numbers of beautiful girls in Normandy, some of them very rich, much richer than she is. Well now, you'll scarcely believe how the mothers and fathers of these heiresses run after me! It is scarcely decent. But it amuses me immensely; I visit their châteaus; they overwhelm me with attentions—

# THE GENERAL

I said he was conceited!

### GODARD

Oh, I am quite aware that it is not for my sake! I don't delude myself as to that; it is for my unmortgaged pastures;

for my savings, and for my habit of living within my income. Do you know what it is that makes me seek an alliance with you above all others?

#### THE GENERAL

No.

#### GODARD

There are certain rich would-be fathers-in-law who promise to obtain from his Majesty a decree, by which I shall be created Comte de Rimonville and Peer of France.

THE GENERAL

You?

GODARD

Yes, I.

### THE GENERAL

Have you won any battles? Have you saved your country? Have you added to its glory? This is pitiful!

# GODARD

Pitiful? (Aside) What shall I say? (Aloud) We differ in our views on this subject, but do you know why I prefer your adorable Pauline?

THE GENERAL

I suppose it is because you love her.

# GODARD

That is a matter of course; but it is also on account of the harmony, the tranquillity, the happiness which reign here! It is so delightful to enter a family of high honor, of pure, sincere, patriarchal manners! I am a man of observation.

THE GENERAL

That is to say, you are inquisitive.

#### GODARD

Curiosity, General, is the mother of observation. I know the seamy side of the whole department.

### THE GENERAL

Really?

#### GODARD

Yes, really! In all the families of which I have spoken to you, I have seen some shabbiness or other. The public sees the decent exterior of irreproachable mothers of family, of charming young persons, of good fathers, of model uncles; they are admitted to the sacrament without confession, they are entrusted with the investments of others. But just learn their inner side, and it is enough to startle a police magistrate.

### THE GENERAL

Ah! That is the way you look at the world, is it? For my part, I try to keep up the illusions in which I have lived. To peer into the inner life of people in that way is the business of priests and magistrates; I have no love for the black robed gentlemen, and I hope to die without ever having seen them! But the sentiment which you express with regard to my house is more pleasing to me than all your fortune. Stick to that point, and you will win my esteem, something which I lightly bestow on no one.

# GODARD

Thank you, General. (Aside) I have won over the father-in-law at any rate.

# SCENE FOURTH.

THE SAME PERSONS, PAULINE AND GERTRUDE.

THE GENERAL (catching sight of Pauline)
Ah! Here you are, darling.

GERTRUDE

Doesn't she look beautiful?

GODARD

Madame.

GERTRUDE

Forgive me, sir. I had no eyes excepting for my handiwork.

GODARD

Mademoiselle is radiant!

GERTRUDE

We have some people to dinner to-day, and I am something more than a stepmother to her; I love to deck her out, for she is to me like my own daughter.

GODARD (aside)

They were evidently expecting me!

GERTRUDE (aside to Godard)

I am going to leave you alone with her. Now is the time for your declaration. (*To the General*) My dear, let us go out on the veranda and see if our friend the doctor is coming.

# THE GENERAL

I am at your service, as usual. (To Pauline) Good-bye, my pet. (To Godard) I shall see you later. (Gertrude and the General go to the veranda, but Gertrude keeps her eye on Godard and Pauline. Ferdinand shows his head at the door of Pauline's chamber, but at a quick sign from her, he hurriedly withdraws it unobserved.)

Godard (at the front of the stage)

Let me see, what fine and dainty speech can I make to her?

Ah, I have it! (To Pauline) It is a very fine day, mademoiselle.

PAULINE

It certainly is, sir.

GODARD

Mademoiselle-

PAULINE

Sir?

GODARD

It is in your power to make the day still finer for me.

PAULINE

How can I do that?

GODARD

Don't you understand me? Has not Madame de Grandchamp said anything to you about the subject nearest my heart?

## PAULINE

While she was helping me to dress, an instant ago, she said a great many complimentary things about you!

GODARD

And did you agree with her, even in the slightest way?

PAULINE

Oh, sir, I agreed with all she said!

Godard (seating himself on a chair, aside)

So far so good. (Aloud) Did she commit a pardonable breach of confidence by telling you that I was so much in love with you that I wished to see you the mistress of Rimonville?

## PAULINE

She gave me to understand by her hints that you were coming with the intention of paying me a very great compliment.

# GODARD (falling on his knees)

I love you madly, mademoiselle; I prefer you to Mlle. de Blondville, to Mlle. de Clairville, to Mlle. de Verville, to Mlle. de Pont-de-Ville—to—

#### PAULINE

Oh, that is sufficient, sir, you throw me into confusion by these proofs of a love which is quite unexpected! Your victims make up almost a hecatomb. (Godard rises.) Your father was contented with taking the victims to market! but you immolate them.

# Godard (aside)

I really believe she is making fun of me. But wait awhile! wait awhile!

#### PAULINE

I think at least that we ought to wait awhile; and I must confess—

## GODARD

You do not wish to marry yet. You are happy with your parents, and you are unwilling to leave your father.

## PAULINE

That is it, exactly.

## GODARD

In that case, there are some mothers who would agree that their daughter was too young, but as your father admits that you are twenty-two I thought that you might possibly have a desire to be settled in life.

## PAULINE

Sir!

## GODARD

You are, I know, quite at liberty to decide both your own destiny and mine; but in accordance with the wishes of your

father and of your second mother, who imagine that your heart is free, may I be permitted still to have hope?

## PAULINE

Sir, however flattering to me may be your intention in thus seeking me out, that does not give you any right to question me so closely.

# GODARD (aside)

Is it possible I have a rival? (Aloud) No one, mademoiselle, gives up the prospect of happiness without a struggle.

## PAULINE

Do you still continue in this strain? I must leave you, sir.

#### GODARD

Thank you, mademoiselle. (Aside) So much for your sarcasm!

## PAULINE

Come sir, you are rich, and nature has given you a fine person; you are so well educated and so witty that you will have no difficulty in finding some young person richer and prettier than I am.

#### GODARD

How can that be when one is in love?

## PAULINE

Well sir, that is the very point.

## Godard (aside)

She is in love with some one; I must find out who it is. (Aloud) Mademoiselle, will you at least permit me to feel that I am not in disgrace and that I may stay here a few days?

#### PAULINE

My father will answer you on that score.

GERTRUDE (coming forward to Godard)
Well, how are things going?

#### GODARD

A blunt refusal, without even a hope of her relenting; her heart is evidently already occupied.

# GERTRUDE (to Godard)

Her heart occupied? This child has been brought up by me, and I know to the contrary; and besides that, no one ever comes here. (Aside) This youth has roused in me suspicions which pierce my heart like a dagger. (To Godard) Why don't you ask her if such is the case?

## GODARD

How could I ask her anything? At my first word of jealous suspicion, she resented my curiosity.

## GERTRUDE

Well, I shall have no hesitation in questioning her.

## THE GENERAL

Ah, here comes the doctor! We shall now learn the truth concerning the death of Champagne's wife.

## SCENE FIFTH.

THE SAME PERSONS AND DR. VERNON.

THE GENERAL

Well, how are you?

#### VERNON

I was quite sure of it. Ladies (he bows to them), as a general rule when a man beats his wife, he takes care not to poison her; he would lose too much by that. He doesn't want to be without a victim.

THE GENERAL (to Godard)

He is a charming fellow!

GODARD

Charming!

THE GENERAL (to the doctor, presenting Godard to him) M. Godard.

GODARD

De Rimonville.

# VERNON (looking at Godard)

If he kills her, it is by mistake from having hit her a little too hard; and he is overwhelmed with grief; while Champagne is innocently delighted to have been made a widower by natural causes. As a matter of fact, his wife died of cholera. It was a very rare case, but he who has once seen Asiatic cholera cannot forget it, and I am glad that I had that opportunity; for, since the campaign in Egypt, I have never met with a case. If I had been called in in time I could have saved her.

## GERTRUDE

How fortunate we are, for if a crime had been committed in this establishment, which for twelve years has been so free from disturbance, I should have been horrified.

## THE GENERAL

Here you see the effect of all this tittle-tattle. But are you quite certain, Vernon?

#### VERNON

Am I certain? That's a fine question to put to a retired surgeon-in-chief who has attended twelve French armies, from 1793 to 1815, and has practiced in Germany, in Spain, in Italy, in Russia, in Poland, and in Egypt!

THE GENERAL (poking him in the ribs)

Away, you charlatan! I reckon you have killed more people than I have in those countries.

#### GODARD

What is this talk that you are alluding to?

#### GERTRUDE

This poor Champagne, our foreman, was supposed to have poisoned his wife.

#### VERNON

Unhappily, the night before she died, they had had an altercation which ended in blows. Ah! they don't take example from their masters.

## GODARD

Such happiness as reigns here ought to be contagious, but the virtues which are exemplified in the countess are very rare.

## GERTRUDE

Is there any merit in loving an excellent husband and a daughter such as these?

## THE GENERAL

Come, Gertrude, say no more! such words ought not to be spoken in public.

# VERNON (aside)

Such things are always said in this way, when it is necessary to make people believe them.

# THE GENERAL (to Vernon)

What are you muttering about?

## VERNON

I was saying that I was sixty-seven years old, and that I was younger than you are, and that I should wish to be loved like that. (Aside) If only I could be sure that it was love.

# THE GENERAL (to the doctor)

I see you are dubious! (To his wife) My dear child, there is no need for me to bless the power of God on your behalf, but I think He must have lent it me, in order that I might love you sufficiently.

## VERNON

You forget that I am a doctor, my dear friend. What you are saying to Madame is only good for the burden of a ballad.

## GERTRUDE

The burdens of some ballads, doctor, are exceedingly true.

## THE GENERAL

Doctor, if you continue teasing my wife, we shall quarrel; to doubt on such a subject as that is an insult.

## VERNON

I have no doubt about it. (To the General) I would merely say, that you have loved so many women with the power of God, that I am in an ecstasy as a doctor to see you still so good a Christian at seventy! (Gertrude glides softly towards the sofa, where the doctor is seated.)

## THE GENERAL

Pshaw! The last passions, my friend, are always the strongest.

## VERNON

You are right. In youth, we love with all our strength which grows weaker with age, while in age we love with all our weakness which is ever on the increase.

## THE GENERAL

Oh, vile philosophy!

# GERTRUDE (to Vernon)

Doctor, how is it that you, who are so good, try to infuse doubts into the heart of Grandchamp? You know that he is so jealous that he would kill a man on suspicion. I have such respect for his feelings that I have concluded upon seeing no one, but you, the mayor and the curé. Do you want me also to forego your society which is so pleasant, so agreeable to us? Ah! Here is Napoleon.

# VERNON (aside)

I take this for a declaration of war. She has sent away every one else, she intends to dismiss me.

# GODARD (to Vernon)

Doctor, you are an intimate friend of the house, tell me, pray, what do you think of Mlle. Pauline? (The doctor rises from his seat, looks at the speaker, blows his nose, and goes to the middle of the stage. The dinner bell sounds.)

## SCENE SIXTH.

THE SAME PERSONS, NAPOLEON AND FELIX.

### NAPOLEON

Papa, papa, didn't you say I could ride Coco?

## THE GENERAL

Certainly.

NAPOLEON (to Felix)

Do you hear that?

GERTRUDE (wiping her son's forehead)
He is quite warm!

## THE GENERAL

But only on condition that some one goes with you.

#### FELIX

You see I was right, Master Napoleon. General, the little rascal wished to go on his pony alone into the country.

### NAPOLEON

He was frightened for me! Do you think I am afraid of anything? (Exit Felix. Dinner bell rings.)

## THE GENERAL

Come and let me kiss you for that word. He is a little soldier and belongs to the Young Guard.

VERNON (with a glance at Gertrude)
He takes after his father!

# GERTRUDE (quickly)

As regards courage, he is his father's counterpart; but as to physique, he resembles me.

### FELIX

Dinner is served.

## GERTRUDE

Very well! But do you know where Ferdinand is? He is generally so punctual. Here, Napoleon, go to the entrance

of the factory and see if he is coming. Tell him to hurry; the bell has rung.

## THE GENERAL

We need not wait for Ferdinand. Godard, give your arm to Pauline. (Vernon offers his arm to Gertrude.) Excuse me, Vernon, you ought to be aware that I never permit anybody but myself to take my wife's arm.

Vernon (aside)

Decidedly, he is incurable.

Napoleon (running back)

I saw Ferdinand down in the main avenue.

VERNON

Give me your hand, you little tyrant!

#### NAPOLEON

Tyrant yourself! I'll bet I could tire you out. (He turns Vernon round and round. All leave, chatting gaily.)

## SCENE SEVENTH.

Ferdinand (cautiously stealing from Pauline's room)

The youngster saved me, but I do not know how he happened to see me in the avenue! One more piece of carelessness like this may ruin us! I must extricate myself from this situation at any price. Here is Pauline refusing Godard's proposal. The General, and especially Gertrude, will try to find out the motives of her refusal! - But I must hasten to reach the veranda, so that I may have the appearance of having come from the main avenue, as Leon said. I hope no one will catch sight of me from the dining-room. (He meets Ramel.) What, Eugène Ramel!

## SCENE EIGHTH.

## FERDINAND AND RAMEL.

RAMEL

You here, Marcandal!

#### FERDINAND

Hush! Don't pronounce that name in this place! If the General heard that my name was Mercandal, he would kill me at once as if I were a mad dog.

RAMEL

And why?

FERDINAND

Because I am the son of General Marcandal.

## RAMEL

A general to whom the Bourbons are in part indebted for their second innings.

## FERDINAND

In the eyes of General Grandchamp, to leave Napoleon for service under the Bourbons was treason against France. Alas! this was also my father's opinion, for he died of grief. You must therefore remember to call me by the name of Ferdinand Charny, my mother's maiden name.

RAMEL

And what are you doing here?

## FERDINAND

I am the manager, the cashier, the factorum of Grand-champ's factory.

RAMEL

How is this? Do you do it from necessity?

#### FERDINAND

From dire necessity! My father spent everything, even the fortune of my poor mother, who lived during her latter years in Brittany on the pension she received as widow of a lieutenant-general.

### RAMEL

How is it that your father, who had command of the Royal Guard, a most brilliant position, died without leaving you anything, not even a patron?

#### FERDINAND

Had he never betrayed his friends, and changed sides, without any reason—

### RAMEL

Come, come, we won't talk any more about that.

#### FERDINAND

My father was a gambler—that was the reason why he was so indulgent to me. But may I ask what has brought you here?

## RAMEL

A fortnight ago I was appointed king's attorney at Louviers.

## FERDINAND

I heard something about it. But the appointment was published under another name.

RAMEL

De la Grandière, I suppose.

FERDINAND

That is it.

RAMEL

In order that I might marry Mlle. de Boudeville, I obtained

permission to assume my mother's name—as you have done. The Boudeville family have given me their protection, and in a year's time I shall doubtless be attorney-general at Rouen—a stepping-stone towards a position at Paris.

#### FERDINAND

And what brings you to our quiet factory?

### RAMEL

I came to investigate a criminal case, a poisoning affair,—a fine introduction into my office. (Felix enters.)

#### FELIX

Monsieur, Madame is worrying about you-

#### FERDINAND

Please ask her to excuse me for a few moments. (Exit Felix.) My dear Eugène, in case the General—who like all retired troopers is very inquisitive—should inquire how we happen to meet here, don't forget to say that we came up the main avenue. It is important for me that you should say so. But go on with your story. It is on account of the wife of Champagne, our foreman, that you have come here; but he is innocent as a new-born babe!

## RAMEL

You believe so, do you? Well, the officers of justice are paid for being incredulous. I see that you still remain, as I left you, the noblest, the most enthusiastic fellow in the world; in short, a poet! A poet who puts the poetry into his life instead of writing it, and believes in the good and the beautiful! And that reminds me—that angel of your dreams, that Gertrude of yours, whatever has become of her?

#### FERDINAND

Hush! Not only has the minister of justice sent you here,

but some celestial influence has sent to me at Louviers the friend whose help I need in my terrible perplexity. Eugène, come here and listen to me awhile. I am going to appeal to you as my college friend, as the confidant of my youth; you won't put on the airs of the prosecuting attorney to me, will you? You will see from the nature of my admissions that I impose upon you the secrecy of the confessional.

### RAMEL

Is it anything criminal?

#### FERDINAND

Oh, nonsense! My faults are such as the judges themselves would be willing to commit.

#### RAMEL

Perhaps I had better not listen to you; or, if I do listen to you—

FERDINAND

Well!

#### RAMEL

I could demand a change of position.

#### FERDINAND

You are always my best and kindest friend. Listen then! For over three years I have been in love with Mlle. Pauline de Grandchamp, and she—

## RAMEL

You needn't go on; I understand. You have been reviving Romeo and Juliet—in the heart of Normandy.

## FERDINAND

With this difference, that the hereditary hatred which stood between the two lovers of the play was a mere trifle in

comparison with the loathing with which the Comte de Grandchamp contemplates the son of the traitor Marcandal!

### RAMEL

Let me see! Mlle. Pauline de Grandchamp will be free in three years; she is rich in her own right—I know this from the Boudevilles. You can easily take her to Switzerland and keep her there until the General's wrath has had time to cool; and then you can make him the respectful apologies required under the circumstances.

## FERDINAND

Do you think I would have asked your advice if the only difficulty lay in the attainment of this trite and easy solution of the problem?

#### RAMEL

Ah! I see, my dear friend. You have already married your Gertrude—your angel—who has become to you like all other angels, after their metamorphoses into a lawful wives.

## FERDINAND

'Tis a hundred times worse than that! Gertrude, my dear sir, is now Madame de Grandchamp.

## RAMEL

Oh, dear! how is it you've thrust yourself into such a hornets' nest?

## FERDINAND

In the same way that people always thrust themselves into hornets' nests; that is, with the hope of finding honey there.

## RAMEL

Oh, oh! This is a very serious matter! Now, really, you must conceal nothing from me.

#### FERDINAND

Mlle. Gertrude de Meilhac, educated at St. Denis, without doubt loved me first of all through ambition; she was glad to know that I was rich, and did all she could to gain my attachment with a view to marriage.

#### RAMEL

Such is the game of all these intriguing orphan girls.

#### FERDINAND

But how came it about that Gertrude has ended by loving me so sincerely? For her passion may be judged by its effects. I call it a passion, but with her it is first love, sole and undivided love, which dominates her whole life, and seems to consume her. When she found that I was a ruined man, towards the close of the year 1816, and knowing that I was like you, a poet, fond of luxury and art, of a soft and happy life, in short, a mere spoilt child, she formed a plan at once base and sublime, such a plan as disappointed passion suggests to women who, for the sake of their love, do all that despots do for the sake of their power; for them, the supreme law is that of their love—

#### RAMEL

The facts, my dear fellow, give me the facts! You are making your defence, recollect, and I am prosecuting attorney.

#### FERDINAND

While I was settling my mother in Brittany, Gertrude met General de Grandchamp, who was seeking a governess for his daughter. She saw nothing in this battered warrior, then fifty-eight years old, but a money-box. She expected that she would soon be left a widow, wealthy and in circumstances to claim her lover and her slave. She said to herself that her marriage would be merely a bad dream, followed quickly by a happy awakening. You see the dream has lasted twelve years! But you know how women reason.

#### RAMEL

They have a special jurisprudence of their own.

## FERDINAND

Gertrude is a woman of the fiercest jealousy. She wishes for fidelity in her lover to recompense her for her infidelity to her husband, and as she has suffered martyrdom, she says, she wishes—

#### RAMEL

To have you in the same house with her, that she may keep watch over you herself.

## FERDINAND

She has been successful in getting me here. For the last three years I have been living in a small house near the factory. I should have left the first week after my arrival, but that two days' acquaintance with Pauline convinced me that I could not live without her.

## RAMEL

Your love for Pauline, it seems to me as a magistrate, makes your position here somewhat less distasteful.

## FERDINAND

My position? I assure you, it is intolerable, among the three characters with whom I am cast. Pauline is daring, like all young persons who are innocent, to whom love is a wholly ideal thing, and who see no evil in anything, so long as it concerns a man whom they intend to marry. The penetration of Gertrude is very acute, but we manage to elude it through Pauline's terror lest my name should be divulged; the sense of this danger gives her strength to dissemble! But now Pauline has just refused Godard, and I do not know what may be the consequences.

## RAMEL

I know Godard; under a somewhat dull exterior he con-

ceals great sagacity, and he is the most inquisitive man in the department. Is he here now?

#### FERDINAND

He dines here to-day.

#### RAMEL

Do not trust him.

#### FERDINAND

Good! If two women, between whom there is no love lost, make the discovery that they are rivals, one of them, I can't say which, would be capable of killing the other; for one is strong in innocence and lawful love; the other, furious to see the fruit of so much dissimulation, so many sacrifices, even crimes, lost to her forever. (*Enter Napoleon*.)

### RAMEL

You alarm mè—me, the prosecuting attorney! Upon my word and honor, women often cost more than they are worth.

#### NAPOLEON

Dear friend! Papa and mamma are impatient about you; they send word that you must leave your business, and Vernon says that your stomach requires it.

#### FERDINAND

You little rogue! You are come eavesdropping!

### NAPOLEON

Mamma whispered in my ear: "Go and see what your friend is doing."

### FERDINAND

Run away, you little scamp! Be off! I am coming. (To Ramel) You see she makes this innocent child a spy over me. (Exit Napoleon.)

RAMEL

Is this the General's child?

FERDINAND

Yes.

RAMEL

He is twelve years old?

FERDINAND

About.

RAMEL

Have you anything more to tell me?

FERDINAND

Really, I think I have told you enough.

### RAMEL

Very well! Go and get your dinner. Say nothing of my arrival, nor of my purpose here. Let them finish their dinner in peace. Now go at once. (Exit Ferdinand.)

## SCENE NINTH.

RAMEL (alone)

Poor fellow! If all young people had studied the annals of the court, as I have done in seven years of a magistrate's work, they would come to the conclusion that marriage must be accepted as the sole romance which is possible in life. But if passion could control itself, it would be virtue.

Curtain to First Act.

### ACT II.

#### SCENE FIRST.

(Stage setting remains as in Act I.)

RAMEL AND MARGUERITE; LATER, FELIX.

(Ramel is buried in his reflections, reclining on the sofa in such a way as to be almost out of sight. Marguerite brings in lights and cards. Night is approaching.)

### MARGUERITE

Four card tables—that will be enough, even though the curé, the mayor and his assistant come. (Felix lights the candles.) I'll wager anything that my poor Pauline will not be married this time. Dear child! If her late mother were to see that she was not the queen of the house, she would weep in her coffin! I only remain here in order to comfort and to wait upon her.

## Felix (aside)

What is this old woman grumbling about? (Aloud) Whom are you complaining of now, Marguerite? I'll bet it is the mistress.

## MARGUERITE

No, it is not; I am blaming the master.

## FELIX

The General? You had better mind your own business. He is a saint, is that man.

## MARGUERITE

Yes, a stone saint, for he is blind.

#### FELIX

You had better say that he has been blinded.

## MARGUERITE

You hit the nail on the head there.

#### FELIX

The General has but one fault—he is jealous.

## MARGUERITE

Yes, and obstinate, too.

#### FELIX

Yes, obstinate; it is the same thing. When once he suspects anything he comes down like a hammer. That was the way he laid two men lifeless at a blow. Between ourselves, there is only one way to treat a trooper of that sort: you must stuff him with flattery. And the mistress certainly does stuff him. Besides, she is clever enough to put blinkers on him, such as they put on shying horses; he can see neither to the right nor to the left, and she says to him, "My dear, look straight ahead!" So she does!

## MARGUERITE

Ah! You think with me that a woman of thirty-two does not love a man of seventy without some object. She is scheming something.

## RAMEL (aside)

Oh, these servants! whom we pay to spy over us!

## FELIX

What can be her scheme? She never leaves the house, she never sees any one.

## MARGUERITE

She would skin a flint! She has taken away the keys from

me—from me who always had the confidence of the former mistress; do you know why she did so?

### FELIX

I suppose she is saving up her pile.

## MARGUERITE

Yes, out of the fortune of Mlle. Pauline, and the profits of the factory. That is the reason why she puts off the marriage of the dear child as long as she can, for she has to give up her fortune when she marries her.

### FELIX

Yes, that's the law.

#### MARGUERITE

I would forgive her everything, if only she made Mademioselle happy; but I sometimes catch my pet in tears, and I ask her what is the matter, and she says nothing but "Good Marguerite!" (Exit Felix.) Let me see, have I done everything? Yes, here are the card tables—the candles—the cards—Ah! the sofa. (She catches sight of Ramel) Good Lord! a stranger!

## RAMEL

Don't be startled, Marguerite.

## MARGUERITE

You must have heard all we said.

## RAMEL

Don't be alarmed. My business is to keep secrets. I am the state's attorney.

## MARGUERITE

Oh!

### SCENE SECOND.

THE SAME PERSONS, PAULINE, GODARD, VERNON, NAPOLEON, FERDINAND, THE GENERAL, MADAME DE GRANDCHAMP.

(Gertrude rushes to Marguerite and snotches the cushions from her hands.)

### GERTRUDE

Marguerite, you know very well what pain you give me, by not allowing me to do everything for your master; besides, I am the only one who knows how to arrange the cushions to his liking.

MARGUERITE (to Pauline)

What a to-do about nothing!

GODARD

Why, look! Here is the state's attorney!

THE GENERAL

The state's attorney at my house?

GERTRUDE

I am surprised!

THE GENERAL (to Ramel)

Sir, what brings you here?

## RAMEL

I asked my friend, M. Ferdinand Mar—(Ferdinand checks him by a gesture. Gertrude and Pauline look at him in alarm).

GERTRUDE (aside)

It is his friend, Eugène Ramel.

#### RAMEL

My friend, Ferdinand de Charny, to whom I have told the object of my visit, to say nothing about it until you had finished your dinner.

#### THE GENERAL

Ferdinand then is your friend?

#### RAMEL

I have known him from childhood; and here we met in your avenue. On meeting, after nine years of separation, we had so many things to talk about, that I caused him to be late.

#### THE GENERAL

But, sir, to what circumstance am I to attribute your presence here?

#### RAMEL

I come in the matter of Jean Nicot, known as Champagne, your foreman, who is charged with a crime.

### GERTRUDE

But, sir, our friend, Doctor Vernon, has declared that Champagne's wife died a natural death.

## VERNON

Yes, sir, cholera.

## RAMEL

Justice, sir, believes in nothing but investigations and convictions of its own. You did wrong to proceed before my arrival.

## FELIX

Madame, shall I bring in the coffee?

### GERTRUDE

Wait awhile! (Aside) How changed this man is, this attorney. I shouldn't have recognized him. He terrifies me.

### THE GENERAL

But how could you be brought here by the crime of Champagne, an old soldier for whom I would stand security?

#### RAMEL

You will learn that, on the arrival of the investigating magistrate.

THE GENERAL

Will you be pleased to take a seat?

FERDINAND (to Ramel, pointing out Pauline)
That is she!

#### RAMEL

A man might lay down his life for such a lovely girl.

# GERTRUDE (to Ramel)

We do not know each other! You have never seen me, have you? You must have pity on us!

## RAMEL

You may depend upon me for that.

The General (who sees Ramel and Gertrude talking together)

Is my wife to be called to this investigation?

## RAMEL

Certainly, General. I came here myself because the countess had not been notified that we required her presence.

THE GENERAL

My wife mixed up in such an affair? It is an outrage!

VERNON

Keep cool, my friend.

Felix (announcing)

Monsieur, the investigating magistrate!

THE GENERAL

Let him come in.

### SCENE THIRD.

THE SAME PERSONS, THE INVESTIGATING MAGISTRATE, CHAMPAGNE, BAUDRILLON AND A GENDARME WHO IS GUARDING CHAMPAGNE.

THE MAGISTRATE (bowing to the company)

Monsieur the state's attorney, this is M. Baudrillon, the druggist.

#### RAMEL

Has M. Baudrillon seen the accused?

## THE MAGISTRATE

No, monsieur, the accused came in charge of a gendarme.

## RAMEL

We shall soon learn the truth in this case! Let M. Baudrillon and the accused approach.

# THE MAGISTRATE

Come forward, M. Baudrillon; (to Champagne) and you also.

#### RAMEL

M. Baudrillon, do you identify this man as the person who bought arsenic from you two days ago?

#### BAUDRILLON

Yes, that is the very man.

### CHAMPAGNE

Didn't I tell you, M. Baudrillon, that it was for the mice that were eating up everything, even in the house, and that I wanted it for Madame?

### THE MAGISTRATE

Do you hear him, madame? This is his plea; he pretends that you yourself sent him to get this stuff, and that he handed the package to you just as he took it from M. Baudrillon.

GERTRUDE

It is true, sir.

RAMEL

Did you make any use of the arsenic, madame?

GERTRUDE

No, sir.

## THE MAGISTRATE

You can then show us the package sent by M. Baudrillon; it should have his label, and if he acknowledges that it is entire and unbroken, the serious charges made against your foreman will in part be disproved. We shall then have nothing more to do than to receive the report of the physician who held the autopsy.

## GERTRUDE

The package, sir, has never been taken from the desk in my bedroom. (Exit.)

CHAMPAGNE

Ah! General, I am' saved!

THE GENERAL

Poor old Champagne!

RAMEL

General, we shall be very happy if we have to announce the

innocence of your foreman; unlike you soldiers, we are always delighted to be beaten.

# GERTRUDE (returning)

Here it is, gentlemen. (The magistrate, Baudrillon and Ramel examine the package.)

# BAUDRILLON (putting on his glasses)

It is intact, gentlemen, perfectly intact. Here is my seal on it unbroken.

## THE MAGISTRATE

Lock that up carefully, madame, for the assizes for some time have had to deal with nothing but poisoning cases.

#### GERTRUDE

You see, sir, I have kept it in my desk, to which none but the General and myself have access. (She returns to her bedroom.)

### RAMEL

General, we will not wait for the report of the autopsy. The principal charge, which you will agree with me was very serious, for all the town was talking of it, has been disproved; and as we have full confidence in the skill and integrity of Doctor Vernon, (Gertrude returns) Champagne, you are at liberty. (General expression of satisfaction.) But you see, my friend, to what painful suspicions a man exposes himself when his home has a bad name.

## CHAMPAGNE

Ask the General, your Honor, if I am not mild as a lamb; but my wife, God forgive her, was the worst that was ever made. An angel could not have stood her. If I have sometimes tried to bring her to reason, the anxious moments you have made me pass here, have been punishment enough! To

be taken up for a prisoner, and to know yourself innocent, while you are in the hands of justice! (Weeps.)

## THE GENERAL

Well! well! You are acquitted now!

#### NAPOLEON

Papa, what is justice?

#### THE GENERAL

Gentlemen, justice ought not to commit errors of this kind.

#### GERTRUDE

There seems to be always something fatal in this justice! And this poor man will always bear a bad name from your arrival here.

#### RAMEL

Madame, for the innocent there is nothing fatal in criminal justice. You see that Champagne has been promptly discharged. (Fixing his eyes on Gertrude.) Those who live without reproach, who indulge no passions, save the noble and the lawful, have nothing to fear from justice.

### GERTRUDE

Sir, you do not know the people of this country. Ten years from this time they will say that Champagne poisoned his wife, that the officers of justice came to investigate and, but for our protection—

## THE GENERAL

Say no more, Gertrude. These gentlemen have done only their duty. (Felix prepares the coffee.) Gentlemen, can I offer you a cup of coffee?

## THE MAGISTRATE

Thank you, General; the urgency of this affair called me

away from home rather suddenly, and my wife is waiting dinner for me at Louviers. (He goes on the veranda to talk with the doctor.)

# THE GENERAL (to Ramel)

You are a friend of Ferdinand's, I believe?

#### RAMEL

Yes, General, and you have in him the noblest heart, the most spotless integrity, the most charming character that I have ever met.

#### PAULINE

This state's attorney seems to be a very kind man!

## Godard (aside)

And why does she say that? Is it because he praised M. Ferdinand? Ah! there's something there!

## GERTRUDE (to Ramel)

Whenever you have any moments to spare, you must come to see M. de Charny. (To the General) Would not that be nice, dear?

# THE MAGISTRATE (coming in from the veranda)

M. de la Grandière, our physician, agrees with Doctor Vernon that this death resulted from Asiatic cholera. We beg, therefore, that you, countess, and you, count, will excuse us for having disturbed, even for a moment, the tranquillity of your charming household.

# RAMEL (to Gertrude in the front of the stage)

Take care! God never protects undertakings so rash as yours. I have discovered all. Give up Ferdinand, leave his life free, and be satisfied with the happiness of a wife. The path which you are following leads to crime.

#### GERTRUDE

I'll die before I give him up!

## RAMEL (aside)

I must get Ferdinand away from this place. (Beckons to Ferdinand, takes his arm, and goes out with him after exchange of formal bows.)

### THE GENERAL

At last we are rid of them! (To Gertrude) Let the coffee be handed round.

#### GERTRUDE

Pauline, kindly ring for the coffee. (Pauline rings.)

### SCENE FOURTH.

THE SAME PERSONS, EXCEPTING FERDINAND, RAMEL, THE MAGISTRATE AND BAUDRILLON.

## GODARD (aside)

I shall find out presently whether Pauline loves Ferdinand. This urchin, who wants to know about justice, seems to me pretty cute; I'll make use of him. (Felix appears.)

#### GERTRUDE

The coffee. (Felix brings in the tray.)

Godard (who has taken Napoleon aside)
Would you like to play a nice trick on somebody?

### NAPOLEON

That I would. Do you know one?

#### GODARD

Come with me, and I'll tell you how you must do it. (Godard goes on veranda with Napoleon.)

#### THE GENERAL

Pauline, my coffee. (Pauline brings it to him.) It isn't sweet enough. (Pauline gives him some sugar.) Thank you, dear.

GERTRUDE

M. de Rimonville?

THE GENERAL

Godard?

GERTRUDE

M. de Rimonville?

### THE GENERAL

Godard, my wife wants to know if you would like some coffee?

## GODARD

Yes, thank you. (He places himself in such way as to watch Pauline.)

## THE GENERAL

It is pleasant to sit down and take a little coffee in quiet!

# Napoleon (running in)

Mamma, mamma! My good friend Ferdinand has just fallen down; he has broken his leg and they are carrying him into the house.

VERNON

That's dreadful!

THE GENERAL

How very unfortunate!

#### PAULINE

Oh! (Falls back on her chair.)

#### GERTRUDE

What is that you said?

#### NAPOLEON

It is all a joke! I only wished to see if you all loved my good friend.

#### GERTRUDE

It is very naughty of you to act in that way; how did you come to think of such a trick?

# NAPOLEON (whispering)

It was Godard.

# Godard (aside)

She loves him! She was nicely caught by my trap, which I have never known to fail.

Gertrude (to Godard, as she offers him some coffee)

Are you aware, sir, that you would make a very indifferent preceptor? It is very bad of you to teach a child such mischievous tricks.

## GODARD

You will come to the conclusion that I did pretty well, when you learn that I have been enabled by this little stratagem to discover my rival. (He points to Ferdinand who is entering the room.)

Gertrude (letting fall the sugar basin)

He!

## Godard (aside)

She is in the same box!

## GERTRUDE (aloud)

You startled me.

THE GENERAL (who has risen from his seat)
What is the matter with you, my dear child?

#### GERTRUDE

Nothing; it is Godard's nonsense; he told me that the public prosecutor had come back. Felix, take away this sugar basin, and bring me another one.

#### VERNON

This is a day of surprises.

#### GERTRUDE

M. Ferdinand, they are going to bring some sugar for you. (Aside) He is not looking at her. (Aloud) How is it, Pauline, you did not put any sugar in your father's coffee?

## Napoleon

Why, of course, it was because she was too scared; didn't you hear her say "oh!"?

## PAULINE

Won't you hold your tongue, you little story-teller! You are always teasing me. (She sits on her father's knee, and puts sugar in his cup.)

## GERTRUDE

Can it be true? And to think that I have taken such pains in dressing her! (*To Godard*) If you are right, your marriage will take place in a fortnight. (*Aloud*) M. Ferdinand, here is your coffee.

## GODARD (aside)

It seems that I caught two in my mouse-trap! And all

the time the General is so calm, so tranquil, and this household is so peaceful! Things are getting mixed up. I shan't go yet; I wish to have a game of whist! Oh! I give up all thoughts of marriage for the present. (Glancing at Ferdinand) There's a lucky fellow! He is loved by two women—two charming, delightful creatures! He is indeed a factotum! But how is it that he is more successful than I am, who have an income of forty thousand?

### GERTRUDE

Pauline, my dear, offer the cards to the gentlemen for a game of whist. It is almost nine o'clock. If they are going to have a game, there is no time to be lost. (Pauline puts out the cards.) Come, Napoleon, bid good-night to the gentlemen, let them see you are a good boy, and don't try to stay up as you usually do.

### NAPOLEON

Good-night, papa. What is justice like?

THE GENERAL

Justice is blind! Good-night, my pet.

## NAPOLEON

Good-night, M. Vernon! What is justice made of?

## VERNON

It is made up of all our crimes. When you are naughty, they whip you; that is justice.

Napoleon

They never whip me.

VERNON

Then they never do justice to you!

### NAPOLEON

Good-night, my good friend! Good-night, Pauline! Good-night, M. Godard-

GODARD

De Rimonville.

NAPOLEON

Have I been good? (Gertrude kisses him.)

THE GENERAL

I have the king.

VERNON

And I, the queen.

FERDINAND (to Godard)

Monsieur, we are partners.

Gertrude (seeing Marguerite)

Be sure to say your prayers, and don't provoke Marguerite—Now, go to bed, dear heart.

## Napoleon

Yes, dear heart! What is love made of? (Exit Napoleon.)

## SCENE FIFTH.

THE SAME PERSONS, EXCEPT NAPOLEON.

## THE GENERAL

When that child begins to ask questions, he is an amusing youngster.

## GERTRUDE

It is often very embarrassing to answer him. (To Pauline) Come, Pauline, let us go and finish our work.

#### VERNON

It is your lead, General.

### THE GENERAL

Mine? You ought to get married, and we could visit at your house, as you visit here, and you would have all the happiness of a family. Don't forget, Godard, that there is no one in the department happier than I am.

#### VERNON

When a man reaches sixty-seven without reaching happiness, it is impossible to catch up. I shall die a bachelor. (The two women set to work at the same piece of embroidery.)

Gertrude (seated with Pauline at the front of the stage)

How is this my child! Godard tells me that you received his advances very coldly; yet he is a very good match for you.

### PAULINE

My father, madame, has given me leave to choose a husband for myself.

### GERTRUDE

Do you know what Godard will say? He will say that you refused him because you had already made your choice.

### PAULINE

If it were true, you and my father would know it. What reason have I for not giving you my confidence?

### GERTRUDE

I cannot say, and I do not blame you. You see in matters of love women keep their secret with heroic constancy, sometimes in the midst of the most cruel torments.

# PAULINE (aside, picking up the scissors, which she had let drop)

Ferdinand was wise in telling me to distrust her—she is so insinuating!

#### GERTRUDE

Perhaps you have in your heart a love like that. If such a misfortune has befallen you, you may rely on my help—I love you, remember! I can win your father's consent; he has confidence in me, and I can sway both his mind and affections. Therefore, dear child, you may open your heart to me.

### PAULINE

You can read my heart, madame, for I am concealing nothing from you.

### THE GENERAL

Vernon, what in the name of everything are you doing? (Faint murmurs are heard among the card players; Pauline casts a look at them.)

### GERTRUDE (aside)

The question point-blank does not do with her. (Aloud) How happy you make me! For this provincial joker, Godard, avers that you almost fainted when he prompted Napoleon to declare that Ferdinand had broken his leg. Ferdinand is a pleasant young fellow, our intimate friend for some four years; what is more natural than your attachment for the youth, whose birth and talents are both in his favor?

### PAULINE

He is my father's clerk.

### GERTRUDE

Thank God, you are not in love with him; I was a little anxious for the moment, for, my dear child, he is a married man.

### PAULINE

What! he is married? Why then does he make a secret of it? (Aside) Married? That would be outrageous. I will ask him this evening. I will give him the signal on which we agreed to meet.

# GERTRUDE (aside)

Not a line of her face changed! Godard is wrong, or this child is more self-possessed than I am. (Aloud) What is the matter with you, my pet?

#### PAULINE

Oh! nothing.

# Gertrude (touching Pauline's neck)

Why, you are quite hot! Do you feel so? (Aside) She loves him, that is plain. But the question is, does he love her? I suffer the torments of the damned!

### PAULINE

I have been working too closely at this frame! And what, pray, is the matter with you?

### GERTRUDE

Nothing. But you asked me why Ferdinand kept his marriage secret.

### PAULINE

Ah! yes!

# GERTRUDE (rising, aside)

If she is in love, she has a will of iron. But where can they have met? I never leave her in the daytime, and Champagne sees him all the time at the factory. No! it is absurd—If she does love him, it is without his knowledge, and she is like all other young girls, who begin to love a man in secret. But if they have come to an understanding, I have given her

such a start that she will be sure to communicate with him about it, if only through her eyes. I will keep them both well in sight.

#### GODARD

We have had wonderful luck, M. Ferdinand! (Ferdinand leaves off playing and goes towards Gertrude.)

# Pauline (aside)

I did not know that it was possible to suffer so much and yet live on.

FERDINAND (to Gertrude)

Madame, won't you take my place in the game?

### GERTRUDE

Pauline, will you go instead. (Aside) I can't tell him that he loves Pauline, that would suggest what may be a new idea to him. What shall I do? (To Ferdinand) She has confessed all.

FERDINAND

Confessed what?

GERTRUDE

Why, all!

FERDINAND

I don't understand-Do you refer to Mlle. de Grandchamp?

GERTRUDE

Yes.

FERDINAND

And what has she been doing?

### GERTRUDE

You have not been false to me? You do not want to kill me?

### FERDINAND

Kill you? She?—I?—

#### GERTRUDE

Am I the victim of one of Godard's jokes?

#### FERDINAND

Gertrude, you are beside yourself!

### Godard (to Pauline)

Ah! Mademoiselle, that is bad play!

#### PAULINE

You lost a great deal by not taking my stepmother for a partner

# GERTRUDE (to Ferdinand)

Ferdinand, I do not know whether I am rightly or wrongly informed; but this I do know; I prefer death to the loss of our hopes.

### FERDINAND

Take care! The doctor has been watching us very keenly for the last few days.

### GERTRUDE (aside)

She has not once looked back at him! (Aloud) She will marry Godard, for her father will compel her to do so.

### FERDINAND

Godard would make an excellent match for any one.

### THE GENERAL

I can't stay here any longer! My daughter plays vilely, and you, Vernon, have trumped my king!

#### VERNON

My dear General, it was a finesse.

### THE GENERAL

You stupid! Come, it is ten o'clock, and time to go to sleep instead of playing cards. Ferdinand, be good enough to take Godard to his room. As for you, Vernon, you deserve to sleep on the floor as a punishment, for trumping my king.

#### GODARD

It is, after all, merely a matter of five francs, General.

### THE GENERAL

It is also a matter of honor. (To Vernon) Come, now, although you have played so badly, let me hand you your hat and cane. (Pauline takes a flower from the vase and plays with it.)

# GERTRUDE (aside)

A signal! I will watch her this night, even though my husband should afterwards kill me for it!

FERDINAND (taking a candlestick from Felix)
M. de Rimonville, I am at your service.

### GODARD

I wish you good-night, madame. My respects to you, mademoiselle. General, good-night.

THE GENERAL

Good-night, Godard.

GODARD

De Rimonville—Doctor, I—

VERNON (looking at him and blowing his nose) Good-bye, my friend.

THE GENERAL (attending the doctor on his way out)
- Good-bye till to-morrow, Vernon, but come early.

### SCENE SIXTH.

GERTRUDE, PAULINE AND THE GENERAL.

GERTRUDE

My dear, Pauline refuses Godard.

THE GENERAL

And what are your reasons, my daughter?

PAULINE

I do not like him sufficiently to take him for a husband.

THE GENERAL

Well, never mind! We will look out some one else for you; but it is time for this to end, for you are now twenty-two, and people will begin to talk about you, my wife and me unless you make an early choice.

PAULINE

May I not be permitted, if I choose, to remain single?

### GERTRUDE

She has made her choice, but probably wishes to tell you by yourself. I will leave you, and she will confess it. (To Pauline) Good-night, my child; talk freely with your father. (Aside) I will listen. (She enters her chamber and proceeds to close the door.)

### SCENE SEVENTH.

THE GENERAL AND PAULINE.

THE GENERAL (aside)

Act as my daughter's confessor! I am utterly unfitted for

such a task! She might rather act as confessor to me. (Aloud) Pauline, come here. (He takes her on his knee) Now, do you really think, my pet, that an old trooper like me doesn't understand your resolution to remain single? Why, of course, that means, in every language in which it has ever been uttered, that a young person is in a special hurry to be married—to some one that she is in love with.

### PAULINE

Papa, I would like to tell you something, but I cannot have confidence in you.

THE GENERAL

And why not, mademoiselle?

#### PAULINE

Because you tell everything to your wife.

### THE GENERAL

And you mean to tell me that you have a secret of such a kind that it cannot be revealed to an angel, to the woman who has educated you—to your second mother!

### PAULINE

Oh! If you are going to be vexed, I shall get off to bed. I used to think that a father's heart would be a place of unfailing refuge for a daughter.

### THE GENERAL

You silly child! Come, I am going to be in a good humor.

### PAULINE

How kind you are! But listen! Suppose I were in love with the son of one of those whom you detest?

THE GENERAL (rising abruptly to his feet and repulsing her)
I should detest you!

#### PAULINE

And this is what you call being good humored? (Gertrude appears.)

### THE GENERAL

My child, there are feelings in my heart which you should never rouse in me; you ought to know this. They are my very life. Do you wish to be the death of your father?

#### PAULINE

Oh!

### THE GENERAL

Dear child! I have had my day. My lot, with you and Gertrude at my side, is an enviable one. But, however sweet and charming is my life, I would quit it without regret, if by that means I could render you happy; for happiness is a debt we owe to those who owe to us their existence.

# Pauline (noticing the door ajar, aside)

Ah! she is listening. (Aloud) Father, I didn't mean what I said, but suppose I felt a love of that kind and it was so violent that I was likely to die of it?

### THE GENERAL

It would be best for you to tell me nothing about it, and wait for your happiness until my death. And yet, since there is nothing more sacred, nothing more dear next to God and country, than children to their parents, children in their turn ought to hold sacred their parents' wishes and never to disobey them, even after their death. If you do not remain faithful to this hatred of mine, I think I should come forth from my grave to curse you!

# Pauline (kissing her father)

Oh! you bad, bad man! At any rate, I shall now find out whether you can keep a secret or not. Swear to me on your honor that you'll not repeat a syllable of what I told you.

### THE GENERAL

I promise you that. But what reason have you for distrusting Gertrude?

### PAULINE

If I told you, you would not believe it.

### THE GENERAL

Are you trying to torture your father?

### PAULINE

No. But which do you place first,—this hatred for traitors, or your own honor?

### THE GENERAL

They are both first with me, for they are based upon a common principle.

### PAULINE

Very well; if you throw away your honor by violating your oath, you may as well throw away your hatred. That is all I wanted to find out.

### THE GENERAL

If women are angelic, they have in them also something of the diabolical. Tell me, who has filled the head of such an innocent girl as you are with ideas like these? This is the way they lead us by the—

Pauline (interrupting him)

Good-night, father.

THE GENERAL

You naughty child!

### PAULINE

Keep my secret, or I will bring you a son-in-law that will drive you wild. (Enters her own apartment.)

### SCENE EIGHTH.

### THE GENERAL (alone)

There must certainly be some key to this enigma! It must be discovered! Yes, and Gertrude shall discover it!

(Scene curtain.)

### SCENE NINTH.

(Pauline's chamber; a small plain room with a bed in the centre and a round table at the left; the entrance is at the right, but there is a secret entrance on the left.)

#### PAULINE

At last I am alone! At last I can be natural! Married? My Ferdinand married? If this is so, he is the falsest, foulest, vilest of men! And I could kill him! Kill him? But I myself could not survive one hour the knowledge that he was actually married. My stepmother I detest! and if she becomes my enemy, there will be war between us, and war in earnest. It would be terrible, for I should tell my father all I know. (She looks at her watch.) Half-past eleven, and he cannot come before midnight, when the whole household is asleep. Poor Ferdinand! He has to risk his life for a few minutes' chat with her he loves! That is what I call true love! Such perils men will not undergo for every woman! But what would not I undergo for him! If my father surprised us, I would be the one to take the first blow. Oh! To suspect the man you love is to suffer greater torment than to lose him! If he dies, you can follow him in death; but doubt—is the cruelest of separations!—Ah! I hear him.

#### SCENE TENTH.

FERDINAND AND PAULINE (who locks the door) Are you married?

FERDINAND

What a joke! Wouldn't I have told you?

#### PAULINE

Ah! (She sinks back on a chair, then falls upon her knees.) Holy Virgin, what vows shall I make to thee? (She kisses Ferdinand's hand.) And you, a thousand blessings on your head!

F'ERDINAND

Who could have told you such a foolish thing?

PAULINE

My stepmother.

### FERDINAND

Why, she knows all about me, and if she did not, she would set spies to discover all; for suspicion with such women as that is certitude! Listen, Pauline, moments now are precious. It was Madame de Grandchamp who brought me into this house.

PAULINE

And why?

FERDINAND

Because she is in love with me.

PAULINE

How horrible! And what of my father?

FERDINAND

She was in love with me before her marriage.

#### PAULINE

She is in love with you; but you, are you in love with her?

### FERDINAND

Do you think if I were, I should have remained in this house?

### PAULINE

And she is still in love with you?

### FERDINAND

Yes, unhappily she is! I ought to tell you that she was at one time beloved by me; but to-day I hate her from the bottom of my heart, and I sometimes ask myself why. Is it because I am in love with you, and every genuine and pure love is by nature exclusive? Is it because the contrast between an angel of purity, such as you, and a devil like her excites in me just as much hatred towards her as it rouses love towards you, my joy, my bliss, my beauteous treasure? I cannot say. But I hate her, and I love you so much that I should not regret dying if your father killed me; for one talk with you, one hour spent in this chamber by your side, seems, even when it is passed away, a whole lifetime to me.

### PAULINE

Oh, say those dear words again! For they bring back my confidence once more. After hearing you speak thus, I forgive you the wrong you have done me in telling that I am not your first and only love, as you are mine. It is but a lost illusion, that is all! Do not be vexed with me. Young girls are foolish, they have no ambition but in their love, and they would fain rule over the past as they rule over the future of their beloved! But you hate her! And in that word, you give to me more proof of love than you have given me for the two years that we have loved. If only you knew with what cruelty this stepmother has put me on the rack, by her questions! But I will be avenged!

#### FERDINAND

You must be very careful! She is a very dangerous woman! She rules your father. She is a woman who will fight to the death!

#### PAULINE

To the death! That is as I wish it!

### FERDINAND

Be prudent, dear Pauline! We are going to act in harmony, are we not? Well, my love, the prosecuting attorney is of opinion that if we would triumph over the difficulties that prevent our union, we must have fortitude enough to part for some time.

#### PAULINE

Oh! Give me two days and I will win over my father!

#### FERDINAND

But you do not know Madame de Grandchamp. She has gone too far to leave off without ruining you, and to do that she will go to any lengths. But I will not go away without giving you what may prove most effective weapons against her.

#### PAULINE

Oh, give them, give them to me!

### FERDINAND

Not yet. And you must promise me not to make use of them, unless your life is in danger; for what I am doing is certainly a breach of confidence. But it is for your sake I do it.

### PAULINE

Tell me what it is?

### FERDINAND

To-morrow I shall put into your hands the letters which

she wrote to me, some of them before, some of them after her marriage. Pauline, do not read them! Swear this to me, in the name of our love, in the name of our happiness! It will be sufficient, should it ever become absolutely necessary, that she knows that they are in your possession; at that moment you will see her trembling and groveling at your feet, for all her machinations then are foiled. But do not use them excepting as a last resort, and keep them well concealed.

#### PAULINE

What a terrible duel it will be!

#### FERDINAND

Terrible! But, Pauline, be courageous, as you have so far been, in keeping the secret of our love; do not acknowledge it, until you find it no longer possible to deny it.

### PAULINE

Oh, why did your father betray the Emperor? If fathers knew how their children would be punished for the sins of their parents, there would be none but good men!

### FERDINAND

Perhaps this sad interview will prove the last moment of happiness we shall have!

# PAULINE (aside)

I will rejoin him, if he leaves me—(Aloud) See, I no longer weep, I am full of courage! But tell me, will your friend know the place where you are hiding?

### FERDINAND

Eugène will be our confidential friend.

### PAULINE

And the letters?

#### FERDINAND

To-morrow! To-morrow! But where will you conceal them?

PAULINE

I shall keep them about me.

FERDINAND

Good! Farewell!

PAULINE

Oh no, not yet!

FERDINAND

A moment more may ruin us.

### PAULINE

Or unite us for life. Come, let me show you out, I shall not rest until I see you in the garden. Come!

#### FERDINAND

Let me take one more glance at this maiden chamber, in which you will think of me—where all things speak of you.

(Scene curtain.)

### SCENE ELEVENTH.

(The drawing-room before described.)

PAULINE on the veranda; GERTRUDE at the door of the room.

### GERTRUDE

She is seeing him out! He has been deceiving me! So has she! (Taking Pauline by the hand, she leads her to the front of the stage.) Will you dare tell me, now, mademoiselle, that you do not love him?

#### PAULINE

Madame, I am deceiving no one.

GERTRUDE

You are deceiving your father.

PAULINE

And you, madame?

GERTRUDE

So both of you are against me-Oh, I shall-

#### PAULINE

You shall do nothing, either against me or against him.

### GERTRUDE

Do not compel me to show my power! You must be obedient to your father, and—he is obedient to me.

### PAULINE

We shall see!

### GERTRUDE (aside)

Her coolness makes my blood boil. My brain reels! (Aloud) Do you know that I would rather die than live without him?

### PAULINE

And so would I, madame. But I am free. I have not sworn as you have to be faithful to a husband—And your husband is my father!

# Gertrude (kneeling before Pauline)

What have I done to you? I have loved you, I have educated you, I have been a good mother to you.

#### PAULINE

Be a faithful wife, and I will say no more.

### GERTRUDE

Nay! Speak! Say all you like—Ah! the struggle has begun.

### SCENE TWELFTH.

THE SAME PERSONS AND THE GENERAL.

#### THE GENERAL

How is this? What is going on here?

# GERTRUDE (to Pauline)

You must feign sickness. Come lie down. (She makes her lie down.) I happened, my dear, to hear moans. Our dear child was calling for help; she was almost suffocated by the flowers in her bedroom.

#### PAULINE

Yes, papa, Marguerite had forgotten to take away the vase of flowers, and I almost died.

### GERTRUDE

Come, my daughter, come into the open air. (They go to-wards the door.)

### THE GENERAL

Stay a moment. What have you done with the flowers?

#### PAULINE

I do not know where Madame has put them.

### GERTRUDE

I threw them into the garden. (The General abruptly rushes out, after setting his candle on the card table.)

### SCENE THIRTEENTH.

PAULINE AND GERTRUDE; LATER, THE GENERAL.

#### GERTRUDE

Go back to your room, lock yourself in! I'll take all the blame. (Pauline goes to her room.) I will wait for him here. (She goes back into her room.)

THE GENERAL (coming in from the garden)

I can find the vase of flowers nowhere. There is some mystery in all these things. Gertrude?—There is no one here! Ah! Madame de Grandchamp, you will have to tell me!—It is a nice thing that I should be deceived by both wife and daughter! (He takes up his candlestick and goes into Gertrude's room.)

Curtain to the Second Act.

### ACT III.

### SCENE FIRST.

(Same stage-setting. Morning.)

GERTRUDE; THEN CHAMPAGNE.

Gertrude (brings a flower vase from the garden and puts it down on the table)

What trouble I had to allay his suspicions! One or two more scenes like that and I shall lose control of him. But I have gained a moment of liberty now—provided Pauline does not come to trouble me! She must be asleep—she went to bed so late!—would it be possible to lock her in her room? (She goes to the door of Pauline's chamber, but cannot find the key.) I am afraid not.

### CHAMPAGNE (coming in)

M. Ferdinand is coming, madame.

#### GERTRUDE

Thank you, Champagne. He went to bed very late, did he not?

### CHAMPAGNE

M. Ferdinand makes his rounds, as you know, every night, and he came in at half-past one o'clock. I sleep over him, and I heard him.

#### GERTRUDE

Does he ever go to bed later than that?

#### CHAMPAGNE

Sometimes he does, but that is according to the time he makes his rounds.

#### GERTRUDE

Very good. Thank you, Champagne. (Exit Champagne.) As the reward for a sacrifice which has lasted for twelve years, and whose agonies can only be understood by women, for what man can guess at such tortures!-what have I asked? Very little! Merely to know that he is here, near to me, without any satisfaction saving, from time to time, a furtive glance at him. I wished only to feel sure that he would wait for me. To feel sure of this is enough for us. us for whom a pure, a heavenly love is something never to be realized. Men never believe that they are loved by us, until they have brought us down into the mire! And this is how he has rewarded me! He makes nocturnal assignations with this stupid girl! Ah! He may as well pronounce my sentence of death; and if he has the courage to do so, I shall have the courage at once to bring about their eternal separation; I can do it! But here he comes! I feel faint! My God! Why hast Thou made me love with such desperate devotion him who no longer loves me!

### SCENE SECOND.

# FERDINAND AND GERTRUDE.

### GERTRUDE

Yesterday you deceived me. You came here last night, through this room, entering by means of a false key, to see Pauline, at the risk of being killed by M. de Grandchamp! Oh! you needn't lie about it. I saw you, and I came upon Pauline just as you had concluded your nocturnal promenade.

You have made a choice upon which I cannot offer you my congratulations. If only you had heard us discussing the matter, on this very spot! If you had seen the boldness of this girl, the effrontery with which she denied everything to me, you would have trembled for your future, that future which belongs to me, and for which I have sold myself, body and soul.

# FERDINAND (aside)

What an avalanche of reproach! (Aloud) Let us try, Gertrude, both of us, to behave wisely in this matter. Above all things, let us try to avoid base accusations. I shall never forget what you have been to me; I still entertain towards you a friendship which is sincere, unalterable and absolute; but I no longer love you.

#### GERTRUDE

That is, since eighteen months ago.

### FERDINAND

No. Since three years ago.

### GERTRUDE

You must admit then that I have the right to detest and make war upon your love for Pauline; for this love has rendered you a traitor and criminal towards me.

### FERDINAND

Madame!

### . GERTRUDE

Yes, you have deceived me. In standing as you did between us two, you made me assume a character which is not mine. I am violent as you know. Violence is frankness, and I am living a life of outrageous duplicity. Tell me, do you know what it is to have to invent new lies, on the spur of the moment, every day,—to live with a dagger at your heart? Oh! This lying! But for us, it is the Nemesis of happiness. It is disgraceful, when it succeeds; it is death, when it fails. And you, other men envy you because you make women love you. You will be applauded, while I shall be despised. And you do not wish me to defend myself! You have nothing but bitter words for a woman who has hidden from you everything—her remorse—her tears! I have suffered alone and without you the wrath of heaven; alone and without you I have descended into my soul's abyss, an abyss which has been opened by the earthquake of sorrow; and, while repentance was gnawing at my heart, I had for you nothing but looks of tenderness, and smiles of gaiety! Come, Ferdinand, do not despise a slave who lies in such utter subjection to your will!

# FERDINAND (aside)

I must put an end to this. (Aloud) Listen to me, Gertrude. When first we met it was youth alone united us in love. I then yielded, you may say, to an impulse of that egotism which lies at the bottom of every man's heart, though he knows it not, concealed under the flowers of youthful passion. There is so much turbulence in our sentiments at twenty-two! The infatuation which may seize us then, permits us not to reflect either upon life as it really is, or upon the seriousness of its issues—

# GERTRUDE (aside)

How calmly he reasons upon it all! Ah! It is infamous!

### FERDINAND

And at that time I loved you freely, with entire devotion; but afterwards—afterwards, life changed its aspect for both of us. If you ask why I remained under a roof which I should never have approached, it is because I chose in Pauline the only woman with whom it was possible for me to end my days. Come, Gertrude, do not break yourself to pieces against

the barrier raised by heaven. Do not torture two beings who ask you to yield them happiness, and who will ever love you dearly.

#### GERTRUDE

Ah, I see! You are the martyr—and I—I am the executioner! Would not I have been your wife to-day, if I had not set your happiness above the satisfaction of my love?

#### FERDINAND

Very well! Do the same thing to-day, by giving me my liberty.

#### GERTRUDE

You mean the liberty of loving some one else. That is not the way you spoke twelve years ago. Now it will cost my life.

#### FERDINAND

It is only in romance that people die of love. In real life they seek consolation.

### GERTRUDE

Do not you men die for your outraged honor, for a word, for a gesture? Well, there are women who die for their love, that is, when their love is a treasure which has become their all, which is their very life! And I am one of these women. Since you have been under this roof, Ferdinand, I have feared a catastrophe every moment. Yes. And I always carry about me something which will enable me to quit this life, the very moment that misfortune falls on us. See! (She shows him a phial.) Now you know the life that I have lived!

### FERDINAND

Ah! you weep!

#### GERTRUDE

I swore that I would keep back these tears, but they are

strangling me! For you—While you speak to me with that cold politeness which is your last insult,—your last insult to a love which you repudiate!—you show not the least sympathy towards me! You would like to see me dead, for then you would be unhampered by me. But, Ferdinand, you do not know me! I am willing to confess everything to the General, whom I would not deceive. This lying fills me with disgust! I shall take my child, I shall come to your house, we will flee together. But no more of Pauline!

#### FERDINAND

If you did this, I would kill myself.

#### GERTRUDE

And I, too, would kill myself! Then we should be united in death, and you would never be hers!

### FERDINAND (aside)

What an infernal creature!

### GERTRUDE

And there is this consideration. What would you do if the barrier which separates you from Pauline were never broken down?

### FERDINAND

Pauline will be able to maintain her own independence.

### GERTRUDE

But if her father should marry her to some one else?

### FERDINAND

It would be my death.

#### GERTRUDE

People die of love in romance. In real life they console

themselves with some one else, and a man only does his duty by being true to her with whom he has plighted troth.

# THE GENERAL (outside)

Gertrude! Gertrude!

#### GERTRUDE

I hear the General calling. (The General appears.) You will then finish your business as quickly as you can, M. Ferdinand, and return promptly; I shall wait for you here. (Exit Ferdinand.)

### SCENE THIRD.

THE GENERAL, GERTRUDE, THEN PAULINE.

### THE GENERAL

This is rather early in the morning for you to be holding a conference with Ferdinand! What were you discussing? The factory?

### GERTRUDE

What were we discussing? I will tell you; for you are exactly like your son; when once you begin to ask questions, you must have a direct answer. I had an impression that Ferdinand had something to do with Pauline's refusal to marry Godard.

### THE GENERAL

When I come to think of it, you were perhaps right.

### GERTRUDE

I got M. Ferdinand to come here for the purpose of clearing up my suspicions, and you interrupted us at the very moment when I seemed likely to gain some information. (Pauline pushes the door ajar unseen.)

### THE GENERAL

But if my daughter is in love with M. Ferdinand-

PAULINE (aside)

I must listen.

### THE GENERAL

I do not see why, when I questioned her yesterday in a paternal manner and with absolute kindness, she should have concealed it from me, for I left her perfectly free, and her feeling for him would be absolutely natural.

### GERTRUDE

She probably misunderstood you or you questioned her before she had made up her mind. The heart of a young girl, as you ought to know, is full of contradictions.

### THE GENERAL

And why should there not be something between them? This young man toils with the courage of a lion, he is the soul of honor, he is probably of good family.

# Pauline (aside)

I understand the situation now. (She withdraws.)

### THE GENERAL

He will give us information on this point. He is above all things trustworthy; but you ought to know his family, for it was you who discovered this treasure for us.

### GERTRUDE

I proposed him to you on the recommendation of old Madame Morin.

### THE GENERAL

But she is dead!

# GERTRUDE (aside)

It is very lucky that I quoted her then! (Aloud) She told me that his mother was Madame de Charny to whom he is devoted; she lives in Brittany and belongs to the Charnys, an old family of that country.

#### THE GENERAL

The Charnys. Then if he is in love with Pauline, and Pauline with him, I, for my part, would prefer him to Godard in spite of Godard's fortune. Ferdinand understands the business of the factory, he could buy the whole establishment with the dowry of Pauline. That would be understood. All he has to do is to tell us where he comes from, who he is, and who his father was. But we will see his mother.

### GERTRUDE

Madame Charny?

### THE GENERAL

Yes, Madame Charny. Doesn't she live near Saint-Melo? That is by no means at the other end of the world.

### GERTRUDE

Just use a little tact, some of the manœuvres of an old soldier, and be very gentle, and you will soon learn whether this child—

### THE GENERAL

Why should I worry about it? Here comes Pauline herself.

### SCENE FOURTH.

THE SAME PERSONS, MARGUERITE, THEN PAULINE.

### THE GENERAL

Ah! It is you, Marguerite. You came near causing the

death of my daughter last night by your carelessness. You forgot—

### MARGUERITE

I, General, cause the death of my child!

### THE GENERAL

You forgot to take away the vase containing flowers of a strong scent, and she was almost suffocated.

### MARGUERITE

Impossible! I took away the vase before the arrival of M. Godard, and Madame must have seen that it was not there while we were dressing Mademoiselle—

### GERTRUDE

You are mistaken. It was there.

# MARGUERITE (aside)

She's a hard one. (Aloud) Does not Madame remember that she wished to put some natural flowers in Mademoiselle's hair, and that she remarked about the vase being gone?

### GERTRUDE

You are inventing a story. But where did you carry it?

### MARGUERITE

To the foot of the veranda.

GERTRUDE (to the General)

Did you find it there last night?

### THE GENERAL

No.

#### GERTRUDE

I took it from the chamber myself last night, and put it

where it now stands. (Points to the vase of flowers on the veranda.)

#### MARGUERITE

Sir, I swear to you by my eternal salvation-

#### GERTRUDE

Do not swear. (Calling.) Pauline!

THE GENERAL

Pauline! (She appears.)

#### GERTRUDE

Was the vase of flowers in your room last night?

### PAULINE.

Yes. Marguerite, my dear old friend, you must have forgotten it.

### MARGUERITE

Why don't you say, Mademoiselle, that some one put it there on purpose to make you ill!

### GERTRUDE

Whom do you mean by some one?

### THE GENERAL

You old fool, if your memory failed you, it is unnecessary for you, at any rate, to accuse anybody else.

# Pauline (aside to Marguerite)

Keep silence! (Aloud) Marguerite, it was there! You forgot it.

### MARGUERITE

It is true, sir, I was thinking of the day before yesterday.

# THE GENERAL (aside)

She has been in my service for twenty years. Strange that she should be so persistent! (*Takes Marguerite aside*.) Come! What did you say about the flowers for my daughter's hair?

MARGUERITE (while Pauline makes signs to her)

I said that, sir,—I am so old that my memory is treacherous.

### THE GENERAL

But even then, why did you suppose that any one in the house had an evil thought towards—

### PAULINE

Say no more, father! She has so much affection for me, dear Marguerite, that she is sometimes distracted by it.

# MARGUERITE (aside)

I am quite sure I took away the flowers.

# THE GENERAL (aside)

Why should my wife and my daughter deceive me? An old trooper like me doesn't permit himself to be caught between two fires, and there is something decidedly crooked—

### GERTRUDE

Marguerite, we will take tea in this room when M. Godard comes down. Tell Felix to bring in all the newspapers.

### MARGUERITE

Very good, madame.

#### SCENE FIFTH.

### GERTRUDE, THE GENERAL AND PAULINE.

# THE GENERAL (kissing his daughter)

You've not even said good-morning to me, you unnatural child.

# PAULINE (kissing him)

But, you began by scolding about nothing. I declare, father, I am going to undertake your education. It is quite time for you, at your age, to control yourself a little,—a young man would not be so quick as you are! You have terrified Marguerite, and when women are in fear, they tell little falsehoods, and you can get nothing out of them.

# THE GENERAL (aside)

I'm in for it now! (Aloud) Your conduct, young lady, does not do much towards promoting my self-control. I wish you to marry, and I propose a man who is young—

### PAULINE

Handsome and well educated!

### THE GENERAL

Please keep silence, when your father addresses you, made-moiselle. A man who possesses a magnificent fortune, at least six times as much as yours, and you refuse him. You are well able to do so, because I leave you free in the matter; but if you do not care for Godard, tell me who it is you choose, if I do not already know.

### PAULINE

Ah, father, you are much more clear-sighted than I am. Tell me who he is?

### THE GENERAL

He is a man from thirty to thirty-five years old, who

pleases me much more than Godard does, although he is without fortune. He is already a member of our family.

### PAULINE

I don't see any of our relations here.

### THE GENERAL

I wonder what you can have against this poor Ferdinand, that you should be unwilling—

### PAULINE.

Ah! Who has been telling you this story? I'll warrant that it is Madame de Grandchamp.

### THE GENERAL

A story? I suppose, you will deny the truth of it! Have you never thought of this fine young fellow?

### PAULINE

Never!

# GERTRUDE (to the General)

She is lying! Just look at her.

### PAULINE

Madame de Grandchamp has doubtless her reasons for supposing that I have an attachment for my father's clerk. Oh! I see how it is, she wishes you to say: "If your heart, my daughter, has no preference for any one, marry Godard." (In a low voice to Gertrude) This, madame, is an atrocious move! To make me abjure my love in my father's presence! But I will have my revenge.

# GERTRUDE (aside to Pauline)

As you choose about that; but marry Godard you shall!

# THE GENERAL (aside)

Can it be possible that these two are at variance? I must question Ferdinand. (Aloud) What were you saying to each other?

### GERTRUDE

Your daughter, my dear, did not like my idea that she was taken with a subordinate; she is deeply humiliated at the thought.

### THE GENERAL

Am I to understand, then, my daughter, that you are not in love with him?

### PAULINE

Father, I—I do not ask you to marry me to any one! I am perfectly happy! The only thing which God has given us women, as our very own, is our heart. I do not understand why Madame de Grandchamp, who is not my mother, should interfere with my feelings.

### GERTRUDE

My child, I desire nothing but your happiness. I am merely your stepmother, I know, but if you had been in love with Ferdinand, I should have—

THE GENERAL (kissing Gertrude's hand)
How good you are!

# PAULINE (aside)

I feel as if I were strangled! Ah! If I could only undo her!

### GERTRUDE

Yes, I should have thrown myself at your father's feet, to win his consent, if he had refused it.

### THE GENERAL

Here comes Ferdinand. (Aside) I shall question him at

my discretion; and then perhaps the mystery will be cleared up.

### SCENE SIXTH.

### THE SAME PERSONS AND FERDINAND.

# THE GENERAL (to Ferdinand)

Come here, my friend. You have been with us over three years now, and I am indebted to you for the power of sleeping soundly amid all the cares of an extensive business. You are almost as much as I am the master of my factory. You have been satisfied with a salary, pretty large it is true, but scarcely proportionate perhaps to the services rendered by you. I think at last I understand the motive of your disinterestedness.

#### FERDINAND

It is my duty, General.

### THE GENERAL

Granted; but does not the heart count for a good deal in this? Come now, Ferdinand, you know my way of considering the different ranks of society, and the distinctions pertaining to them. We are all the sons of our own works. I have been a soldier. You may therefore have full confidence in me. They have told me all; how you love a certain young person, here present. If you desire it, she shall be yours. My wife has pleaded your cause, and I must acknowledge that she has gained it before the tribunal of my heart.

### FERDINAND

General, can this be true? Madame de Grandchamp has pleaded my cause? Ah, madame! (He falls on his knees before her.) I acknowledge in this your greatness of heart! You are sublime, you are an angel! (Rising and rushing forward to Pauline.) Pauline, my Pauline!

# GERTRUDE (to the General)

I guessed aright; he is in love with Pauline.

#### PAULINE

Sir, have I ever given you the right, by a single look, or by a single word, to utter my name in this way? No one could be more astonished than I am to find that I have inspired you with sentiments which might flatter others, but which I can never reciprocate; I have a higher ambition.

### THE GENERAL

Pauline, my child, you are more than severe. Come, tell me, is there not some misunderstanding here? Ferdinand, come here, come close to me.

#### FERDINAND

How is it, mademoiselle, when your stepmother, and your father agree?

Pauline (in a low voice to Ferdinand)

We are lost!

### THE GENERAL

Now I am going to act the tyrant. Tell me, Ferdinand, of course your family is an honorable one?

PAULINE (to Ferdinand)

You hear that!

### THE GENERAL

Your father must certainly have been a man of as honorable a profession as mine was; my father was sergeant of the watch.

# GERTRUDE (aside)

They are now separated forever.

#### FERDINAND

Ah! (To Gertrude) I understand your move. (To the General) General, I do not deny that once in a dream, long ago, in a sweet dream, in which it was delicious for a man poor and without family to indulge in—dreams we are told are all the fortune that ever comes to the unfortunate—I do not deny that I once regarded it as a piece of overwhelming happiness to become a member of your family; but the reception which mademoiselle accords to those natural hopes of mine, and which you have been cruel enough to make me reveal, is such that at the present moment they have left my heart, never again to return! I have been rudely awakened from that dream, General. The poor man has his pride, which it is as ungenerous in the rich man to wound, as it would be for any one to insult-mark what I say-your attachment to Napoleon. (In a low voice to Gertrude) You are playing a terrible part!

GERTRUDE (aside to Ferdinand)

She shall marry Godard.

# THE GENERAL

Poor young man! (To Pauline) He is everything that is good! He inspires me with affection. (He takes Ferdinand aside.) If I were in your place, and at your age, I would have—No, no, what the devil am I saying?—After all she is my daughter!

# FERDINAND

General, I make an appeal to your honor; swear that you will keep, as the most profound secret, what I am going to confide to you; and this secrecy must extend so far even as to Madame de Grandchamp.

# THE GENERAL (aside)

What is this? He also, like my daughter, seems to distrust my wife. But, by heaven, I will learn what it means!

(Aloud) I consent; you have the word of a man who has never once broken a promise given.

### FERDINAND

After having forced me to reveal that which I had buried in the recesses of my heart, and after I have been thunder-struck, for that is the only word in which to express it, by the disdain of Mademoiselle Pauline, it is impossible for me to remain here any longer. I shall therefore put my accounts in order; this evening I shall quit this place, and to-morrow will leave France for America, if I can find a ship sailing from Havre.

# THE GENERAL (aside)

It is as well that he should leave, for he will be sure to return. (To Ferdinand) May I tell this to my daughter?

### FERDINAND

Yes, but to no one else.

# The General (aside to Pauline)

Pauline! my daughter, you have so cruelly humiliated this poor youth, that the factory is on the point of losing its manager; Ferdinand is to leave this evening for America.

# Pauline (to the General)

He is right, father. He is doing of his own accord, what you doubtless would have advised him to do.

# GERTRUDE (to Ferdinand)

She shall marry Godard.

# FERDINAND (to Gertrude)

If I do not punish you for your atrocious conduct, God Himself will!

# THE GENERAL (to Pauline)

America is a long way off and the climate is deadly.

# Pauline (to the General)

Many a fortune is made there.

# THE GENERAL (aside)

She does not love him. (To Ferdinand) Ferdinand, you must not leave before I have put in your hands sufficient to start you on the road to fortune.

## FERDINAND

I thank you, General; but what is due me will be sufficient. Moreover, I shall not be missed in your factory, for I have trained Champagne so thoroughly as a foreman, that he is skillful enough to become my successor; and if you will go with me to the factory, you will see—

## THE GENERAL

I will gladly accompany you. (Aside) Everything is in such a muddle here, that I must go and look for Vernon. The advice and clear-sightedness of my old friend, the doctor, will be of service in ferreting out what it is that disturbs this household, for there is something or other. Ferdinand, I will follow you. Ladies, we will soon be back again. (Aside) There is something or other! (The General follows Ferdinand out.)

# SCENE SEVENTH.

# GERTRUDE AND PAULINE.

# Pauline (locking the door)

Madame, do you consider that a pure love, a love which comprises and enhances all human happiness, which makes

us understand that happiness which is divine,—do you consider such a love to be dearer and more precious to us than life?

## GERTRUDE

You have been reading the *Nouvelle Héloise*, my dear. What you say is rather stilted in diction, but it is nevertheless true.

### PAULINE

Well, madame, you have just caused me to commit suicide.

## GERTRUDE

The very act you would have been happy to see me commit; and if you had succeeded in forcing me to it, you would have felt in your heart the joy which fills mine at present.

## PAULINE

'According to my father, war between civilized nations has its laws; but the war which you wage against me, madame, is that of savages.

## GERTRUDE

You may do as I do, if you can—but you can do nothing! You shall marry Godard. He is a very good match for you; you will be very happy, I assure you, for he has fine qualities.

# PAULINE

And you think that I will quietly let you marry Ferdinand?

## GERTRUDE

After the few words which we have exchanged this evening, why should we now indulge in the language of hypocrisy? I was in love with Ferdinand, my dear Pauline, when you were but eight years old.

# PAULINE

But now you are more than thirty—and I am still young.

Moreover, he hates you, he abhors you! He has told me so, and he wishes to have nothing to do with a woman capable of the black treachery with which you have acted towards my father.

## GERTRUDE

In the eyes of Ferdinand, my love will serve as my vindication.

## PAULINE

He shares the feelings which I have for you; he despises you, madame.

## GERTRUDE

Do you really believe it? Well, if it so, my dear, I have one more reason for the position I take, for if he refuses to become my husband, to gratify his love, Pauline, you will force me to marry him for the sake of satisfying my revenge. When he came to this house, was he not aware that I was here?

## PAULINE

You probably caught him by some such snare as you have just set for us. and into which both of us have fallen.

# GERTRUDE

Now, my child, a single word more will put an end to everything between us. Have you not said a hundred times, a thousand times, in moments when you were all feeling, all soul, that you would make the greatest sacrifices for Ferdinand?

## PAULINE.

Yes, madame.

# GERTRUDE.

You said you would leave your father, would flee from France; you would give your life, your honor, your salvation for Ferdinand?

## PAULINE

Yes, and if there is anything else that I can offer besides myself—this world and heaven!

## GERTRUDE

Let me tell you, then, that all that you have wished to do, I have done! It is enough therefore to assure you that nothing, not even death itself, can arrest my course.

## PAULINE

In saying this, you give me the right to defend myself before my father (Aside) O Ferdinand! Our love, (Gertrude takes a seat on the sofa during the soliloquy of Pauline) as she has said, is greater than life. (To Gertrude) Madame, you must repair all the evil that you have done to me; the sole difficulties which lie in the way of my marriage with Ferdinand, you must overcome. Yes, you, who have complete control over my father, you must make him forego his hatred of the son of General Marcandal.

## GERTRUDE

And do you really mean that?

# PAULINE

Yes, madame.

# GERTRUDE

And what means do you possess formidable enough to compel me to do so?

## PAULINE

Are we not carrying on a warfare of savages?

### GERTRUDE

Say rather, of women, which is even more terrible! Savages torment the body alone; while we direct our arrows

against the heart, the self-love, the pride, the soul of those whom we attack in the very midst of their happiness.

## PAULINE

That is truly said. It is the whole woman-nature that I attack. Therefore, my dear and truly honored stepmother, you must eliminate by to-morrow, and not later, all the obstacles that stand between me and Ferdinand; or you may be sure my father shall learn from me the whole course of your conduct, both before and after your marriage.

## GERTRUDE

Ah! That is the way you are going to do it! Poor child! He will never believe you.

### PAULINE

Oh, I know the domination you exercise over my father; but I have proofs.

GERTRUDE

Proofs! Proofs!

## PAULINE

I went to Ferdinand's house—I am very inquisitive—and I found there your letters, madame; I took from among them those which would convince even the blindness of my father, for they will prove to him—

GERTRUDE

What will they prove?

PAULINE

Everything!

## GERTRUDE

But, this will be, unhappy child, both theft and murder! For think of his age.

### PAULINE

And have not you accomplished the murder of my happiness? Have you not forced me to deny, both to my father and to Ferdinand, my love, my glory, my life?

# GERTRUDE (aside)

This is a mere trick; she knows nothing. (Aloud) This is a clever stratagem, but I never wrote a single line. What you say is not true. It is impossible. Where are the letters?

## PAULINE

They are in my possession.

### GERTRUDE

In your room?

#### PAULINE

They are where you can never reach them.

# GERTRUDE (aside)

Madness with its wildest dreams spins through my brain! My fingers itch for murder. It is in such moments as this that men kill each other! How gladly would I kill her! My God! do not forsake me! Leave me my reason!—(Aloud) Wait a moment.

# PAULINE (aside)

My thanks to you, Ferdinand! I see how much you love me; I have been able to pay back to her all the wrongs she did us a short time ago—and—she shall save us from all we feared!

# Gertrude (aside)

She must have them about her,—but how can I be sure of that? Ah! (Aloud) Pauline! If you have had these letters for long, you must have known that I was in love with Ferdinand. You can only lately have received them.

### PAULINE

They came into my hands this morning.

### GERTRUDE

You have not read them all?

### PAULINE

Enough to find out that they would ruin you.

### GERTRUDE

Pauline, life is just beginning for you. (A knock is heard.) Ferdinand is the first man, young, well educated and distinguished, for he is distinguished, by whom you have been attracted; but there are many others in the world such as he Ferdinand has been in a certain sense under the same roof with you, and you have seen him every day; the first impulses of your heart have therefore directed you to him. I understand this, and it is quite natural. Had I been in your place I should doubtless have experienced the same feelings. But, my dear, you know not the ways either of the world or of society. And if, like so many other women, you have been deceiving yourself—for we women, ah, how often are we thus deceived!— you still can make another choice. But for me the deed has been done, I have no other choice to make. Ferdinand is all I have, for I have passed my thirtieth year, and I have sacrificed to him what I should have kept unsullied the honor of an aged man. The field is clear for you, you may vet love some other man more ardently than you can love today—this is my experience. Pauline, child, give him up, and you will learn what a devoted slave you will have in me! You will have more than a mother, more than a friend, you will have the unstinted help of a soul that is lost! Oh! listen to me! (She kneels, and raises her hands to Pauline's corsage.) Behold me at your feet, acknowledging you my rival! Is this sufficient humiliation for me? Oh, if you only knew what this costs a woman to undergo! Relent! Relent, and save me.

(A loud knocking is heard, she takes advantage of Pauline's confusion to feel for the letters.) Give back my life to me! (Aside) She has them!

### PAULINE

Oh, leave me, madame! Will you force me to call for some one? (She pushes Gertrude away, and proceeds to open the door.)

# GERTRUDE (aside)

I was not deceived, she has them about her; but I must not leave them with her one single hour.

## SCENE EIGHTH.

THE SAME PERSONS, THE GENERAL AND VERNON.

## THE GENERAL

You two, locked in together! Why did you call out, Pauline?

## VERNON

How pale you are, my child! Let me feel your pulse.

THE GENERAL (to Gertrude)

And you also seem to be very much excited.

# GERTRUDE

There was a joke between us and we were indulging in a laugh; weren't we, Pauline? You were laughing, my pet?

## PAULINE

Yes, papa. Dear mamma and I were in a gale of laughter.

VERNON (in a low voice to Pauline)
That's a pretty big lie!

## THE GENERAL

Didn't you hear us knocking?

## PAULINE

We heard quite plainly, papa; but we didn't know it was you.

THE GENERAL (in a low voice to Vernon)

They seem to be leagued against me. (Aloud) But what was it all about?

### GERTRUDE

Dear husband, you always want to know everything! We were speaking for the moment about the tenants, about some acquaintances of ours.—But let me go and ring for tea.

## THE GENERAL

But tell me all about it?

### GERTRUDE

Why this is sheer tyranny! To tell the truth, we locked ourselves in so that no one should disturb us. Is that plain enough?

## VERNON

I should think it quite plain.

# GERTRUDE (whispering to the General)

I wished to worm her secrets out of your daughter, for it is evident that she has some secrets! And you come interrupting us, while I am working in your service—for Pauline is not my daughter; you arrive, as if you were charging a hostile squadron, and interrupt us, at the very moment I was going to learn something.

# THE GENERAL

Madame the Countess of Grandchamp, ever since the arrival of Godard—

### GERTRUDE

Ah! yes, Godard. Well! he is here still.

## THE GENERAL

Do not ridicule my words! Ever since yesterday nothing has gone as usual! By God! I'd like to know—

### GERTRUDE

Sir, this oath is the first I have ever heard from you. Felix, bring in the tea. (*To the General*) You are tired, it seems, of twelve years of happiness?

## THE GENERAL

I am not, and never will be a tyrant. A little time ago I came unexpectedly upon you and Ferdinand engaged in conversation, and I felt I was in the way. Again, I come here and you are locked in with my daughter, and my appearance seemed to put you out. And to cap all, last night—

## VERNON

Come, General, you can quarrel with Madame as much as you like, but not before other people. (Godard is heard approaching.) I hear Godard. (Whispers to the General) Is this keeping your promise to me? In treating with women—I am bound as a doctor to admit it—you must leave them to betray themselves; while at the same time you watch them carefully; otherwise your violence draws forth their tears, and when once the hydraulic machinery begins to play, they drown a man as if they had the strength of a triple Hercules!

# SCENE NINTH.

THE SAME PERSONS AND GODARD.

### GODARD

Ladies, I came once before to present my compliments and

respects to you, but I found the door closed. General, I wish you good-day. (The General takes up a newspaper and waves his hand in greeting.) Ah! Here is my adversary of yester-day's game. Have you come to take your revenge, doctor?

VERNON

No, I came to take some tea.

GODARD

Ah! I see you keep up here the custom of the English, Russians and Chinese.

PAULINE

Would you prefer some coffee?

GERTRUDE

Marguerite, bring in some coffee.

GODARD

No, no; allow me to have some tea; I will, for once, deviate from my every-day custom. Moreover, you have your luncheon at noon, I see, and a cup of coffee with cream would take away my appetite for that meal. And then the English, the Russians and the Chinese are not entirely incorrect in taste.

VERNON

Tea, sir, is an excellent thing.

GODARD

Yes, when it is good.

PAULINE

This is caravan tea.

GERTRUDE

Doctor, have you seen the papers? (To Pauline) Go and talk to M. de Rimonville, my daughter; I, myself, will make tea.

#### GODARD

Perhaps Mlle. de Grandchamp likes my conversation no better than my person?

PAULINE

You are mistaken, sir.

THE GENERAL

Godard-

## PAULINE

Should you do me the favor of no longer seeking me in marriage, you would still possess in my eyes qualities of sufficient brilliancy to captivate the young ladies Boudeville, Clinville, Derville, etc.

### GODARD

That is enough, mademoiselle. Ah! How you do ridicule an unfortunate lover, in spite of his income of forty thousand francs! The longer I stay here, the more I regret it. What a lucky fellow M. Ferdinand de Charny is!

## PAULINE

Lucky? Why is he lucky? Poor fellow! Does his good fortune consist in the fact that he is my father's clerk?

GERTRUDE

M. de Rimonville-

THE GENERAL

Godard-

GERTRUDE

M. de Rimonville-

THE GENERAL

Godard, my wife is speaking to you.

GERTRUDE

Do you like much or little sugar?

### GODARD

A moderate quantity.

## GERTRUDE

Not much cream, I suppose?

### GODARD

On the contrary, plenty of cream, countess. (*To Pauline*) Ah! M. Ferdinand is not then, after all, the man who—whom you have distinguished by your favor? I can at least assure you that he is very much to the taste of your stepmother.

# PAULINE (aside)

How annoying these inquisitive provincials are!

# Godard (aside)

It is fair that I should amuse myself a little at her expense before I take leave. I must get something out of this visit.

## GERTRUDE

M. de Rimonville, if you desire anything solid, there are sandwiches here.

### GODARD

Thank you, madame.

GERTRUDE (whispering to Godard)

Your cause is not wholly lost.

## GODARD

O madame! I have thought a great deal over my rejection by Mlle. de Grandchamp.

## GERTRUDE

Ah! (To the doctor) Doctor, you will take yours as usual, I suppose?

#### VERNON

If you please, madame.

# Godard (to Pauline)

Did you say, "poor fellow," mademoiselle? for M. Ferdinand is not so poor as you think him. He is richer than I am!

### PAULINE

How do you know that?

## GODARD

I am certain of it, and I will tell you why. This M. Ferdinand, whom you think you know, is an exceedingly crafty fellow—

# PAULINE (aside)

Can he possibly know his real name?

# GERTRUDE (aside)

A few drops of opium in her tea will put her to sleep, and I shall be saved.

# Godard (to Pauline)

You cannot deny the authority of him who has put me on the track.

## PAULINE

Oh, sir! Kindly tell—

# GODARD

It was the prosecuting attorney. I remembered that at the house of the Boudevilles it was said that your clerk—

# PAULINE (aside)

He is putting me on the rack.

Gertrude (offering a cup to Pauline)

Here, Pauline.

# Vernon (aside)

Am I dreaming? I thought I saw her put something into Pauline's cup.

PAULINE (to Godard)

And what did they say?

### GODARD

Ah! Ah! How attentive you are! I should have been exceedingly flattered to think that you put on that air when any one was talking about me, as I am now talking about M. Ferdinand de Charny.

### PAULINE

What a strange taste this tea has! You find yours good?

### GODARD

You talk about the tea in order to distract my attention from the interest you take in what I am telling you. I see through it all! Well, come now, I am going to astonish you. You must know that M. Ferdinand is—

PAULINE

Is-?

GODARD

A millionaire.

PAULINE

You are joking, M. Godard.

# GODARD

On my word of honor, mademoiselle, he possesses a treasure. (Aside) She is madly in love with him.

# Pauline (aside)

How this fool startled me. (She rises from her seat and Vernon takes the teacup from her hand.)

VERNON

Let me take it, my child.

THE GENERAL (to his wife)

What ails you, dearest? you seem-

Vernon (who has retained Pauline's cup and returned his own in its place to Gertrude. Aside)

It is laudanum; fortunately the dose is light; but it is very certain that something is about to happen. (To Godard) M. Godard, you are a crafty fox. (Godard takes out his hand-kerchief as if to blow his nose.) Ah!

GODARD

Doctor, I bear no ill-will.

VERNON

Listen! Do you think that you could carry off the General to the factory and keep him there for an hour?

GODARD

I would like to have that youngster to help me.

VERNON

He is at school until dinner-time.

GODARD

Why do you wish me to do this?

VERNON

Now I beg of you, for you are a good fellow, to do as I bid you; it is necessary. Do you love Pauline?

GODARD

I did love her yesterday, but this morning— (Aside) I

must find out what he is concealing from me. (To Vernon) It shall be done! I will go on to the veranda and come back again with a message that Ferdinand sends for the General. You may rely upon me. Ah! Here is Ferdinand himself, that is all right! (Goes on the veranda.)

### PAULINE

'Tis peculiar, how drowsy I feel. (She lies down on the divan; Ferdinand appears and talks with Godard.)

## SCENE TENTH.

THE SAME PERSONS AND FERDINAND.

### FERDINAND

General, it will be necessary for you to come to the office and the factory in order to verify my accounts.

THE GENERAL

That is only just to you.

PAULINE (drowsily)

Ferdinand!

## GODARD

Ah, General, I'll take advantage of this occasion to visit your establishment with you, for I have never seen it.

THE GENERAL

Very good, come along Godard.

GODARD

De Rimonville.

GERTRUDE (aside)

If they go away, fortune will favor me indeed.

VERNON (who has overheard her; aside). Fortune, in this case, is represented by me—

## SCENE ELEVENTH.

GERTRUDE, VERNON, PAULINE, AND LATER MARGUERITE.

## GERTRUDE

Doctor, would you like another cup of tea?

### VERNON

Thank you, but I am so deep in the election returns that I have not yet finished my first cup.

GERTRUDE (pointing to Pauline), Poor child, you see she is sleeping?

## VERNON

How is this? She is sleeping?

## GERTRUDE

It is no wonder. Imagine, doctor, she did not go to sleep until three o'clock this morning. We were greatly disturbed last night.

## VERNON

Let me assist you to carry her to her room.

## GERTRUDE

It is not necessary. Marguerite, help me put this poor child to bed. She will be more comfortable there.

(Marguerite comes forward and assists Gertrude to carry, Pauline away.)

## SCENE TWELFTH.

VERNON, AND FELIX (who enters at this juncture)

VERNON

Felix!

FELIX

Is there anything I can do for you, sir?

VERNON

Is there a closet anywhere here in which I can lock up something?

FELIX (pointing to the closet)

Here is a place, sir.

### VERNON

Good! Felix, don't say a word of this to a single soul. (Aside) He will be sure to remember it. (Aloud) I am playing a trick on the General, and the trick will fail if you say anything.

#### FELIX

I will be as dumb as a fish. (The doctor takes from him the key of the closet.)

## VERNON

And now leave me alone with your mistress, who is coming back here, and be on the watch that no one interrupts us for a moment.

# Felix (going out)

Marguerite was right; there is something in the wind, that's certain.

# MARGUERITE (returning)

There is nothing the matter. Mademoiselle is sleeping quietly. (Exit.)

## SCENE THIRTEENTH.

# VERNON (alone)

What can have set by the ears two women who have hitherto lived in peace? All doctors, little though they be philosophers, can tell. The poor General, who all his life has had no other idea excepting that of escaping the common lot! Yet I see no one here likely to cause him jealousy, but myself and Ferdinand. It is not probable that I am the man; but Ferdinand—Yet I have so far noticed nothing—I hear her coming! Now for the tug-of-war!

# SCENE FOURTEENTH.

## VERNON AND GERTRUDE.

# GERTRUDE (aside)

I have them!—I am going to burn them in my chamber. (She meets Vernon.) Ah!

# VERNON

Madame, I have sent everybody away.

# GERTRUDE

May I ask you why?

# VERNON

In order that we may have our explanation without witnesses.

# GERTRUDE

Explanation! By what right do you—you, the parasite of the house, pretend to have an explanation with the Comtesse de Grandchamp?

### VERNON

I, a parasite? Madame! I have an income of ten thousand francs, besides my pension; I have the rank of general, and my fortune will be bequeathed to the children of my old friend! A parasite indeed! You forget that I am not only here as a friend but as a doctor, and—you poured certain drops of laudanum into Pauline's tea.

### GERTRUDE

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### VERNON

I saw you do it, and I have the cup.

### GERTRUDE

You have the cup? Why, I washed it myself!

### VERNON

Yes, you washed mine, which I gave you in exchange for that of Pauline! I was not reading the newspaper, I was watching you.

### GERTRUDE

Oh! sir, how unworthy of you!

## VERNON

You must confess that what I did then is of great service to you, for if you had by the effect of that draught brought Pauline to the brink of the grave, you would have been very glad of my services.

### GERTRUDE

The brink of the grave—why, doctor, I put in only a very few drops.

## VERNON

You admit, then, that you put opium in her tea.

### GERTRUDE

Doctor—this is outrageous!

### VERNON

That I have obtained a confession from you? Every woman under the same circumstances would have said the same thing. I know it by experience. But that is not all. You have several other things to confide in me.

# GERTRUDE (aside)

He is a spy! The only thing I can do is to make him my accomplice. (Aloud) Doctor, you are too useful to me to admit of our quarreling. In a moment, if you will wait here, I will return and speak frankly to you. (She goes into her chamber and locks the door.)

## VERNON

She has turned the key! I am caught, tricked! I cannot after all resort to violence. What is she doing? She is going to hide her flask of opium. A man is always wrong when he undertakes to discharge for a friend the offices which my old friend, this poor General, expects of me. She is going to entangle me—Ah! Here she comes.

# GERTRUDE (aside)

I have burnt them! There is not a trace left—I am saved! (Aloud) Doctor!

VERNON

Madame?

# GERTRUDE

My stepdaughter Pauline, whom you believed to be an innocent girl, an angel, had carried off furtively and criminally something whose discovery would have compromised the honor and the life of four persons.

#### VERNON

Four! (Aside) That is herself, the General—Ah! her son, perhaps—and the unknown.

### GERTRUDE

This secret, concerning which she is forced to keep silence, even though it imperilled her life to do so—

### VERNON

I don't quite catch your meaning.

### GERTRUDE

In short, the proofs of this secret are now destroyed! And you, doctor, who love us all, you would be as base, as infamous as she is—even more so, because you are a man, and have not the insensate passions of a woman!—You would be a monster if you were to take another step along the path on which you have now started—

## VERNON

You mean that for intimidation? Madame, since civilized society first sprang into being, the seed which you are sowing has produced a crop whose name is crime.

## GERTRUDE

But there are four lives at stake; remember that. (Aside) He is giving way. (Aloud) In spite of this danger I demand that you will assist me in maintaining peace here, and that you will immediately go and get something by which Pauline may be roused from her slumber. And you will explain, if necessary, her drowsiness to the General. Further, you will give me back the cup, for I am sure you intend to do so, and each step that we take together in this affair shall be fully explained to you.

VERNON

Madame!

### GERTRUDE

We must separate now, for the General will soon be back.

# VERNON (aside)

I shall still look after you! I have now a weapon that I can use and— (Exit).

## SCENE FIFTEENTH.

Gertrude (alone, leaning against the closet in which the cup is locked up)

Where can he have hidden that cup?

Curtain to the Third Act.

## ACT IV.

## SCENE FIRST.

(Pauline's chamber.)

GERTRUDE AND PAULINE (the latter sleeping on a large armchair on the left).

# GERTRUDE (cautiously entering)

She is sleeping, and the doctor said that she would wake up at once. Her slumber alarms me. This then is the girl that he is in love with. I do not find her pretty at all. Oh, yes, after all, she is beautiful! But how is it that men do not see that beauty is nothing but a promise, and that love is the—(some one knocks). How is this; there are people coming.

VERNON (outside)

May I come in, Pauline?

GERTRUDE

It is the doctor.

# SCENE SECOND.

THE SAME PERSONS AND VERNON.

GERTRUDE

You told me that she would soon awake.

VERNON

Don't be alarmed. (Calling aloud) Pauline! Pauline!

# Pauline (awakening)

O M. Vernon! Where am I? Ah! In my own room. What has happened to me?

### VERNON

My child, you fell asleep while you were taking your tea. Madame de Grandchamp feared as I did that this was the beginning of a sickness; but it is no such thing. It is altogether, as it seems to me, the consequence of a night without sleep.

### GERTRUDE

And now, Pauline, how do you feel?

## PAULINE

I have been sleeping—and madame was here while I slept! (She starts up; puts her hand upon her bosom.) Ah! it is outrageous! (To Vernon) Doctor, can you have been an accomplice?

## GERTRUDE

An accomplice in what? What were you going to say?

## VERNON

I! my child! Could you suppose that I was the accomplice of an evil action wrought against you, whom I love as if you were my daughter? Don't speak of such a thing as that! But come, tell me?

## PAULINE

There is nothing, doctor, nothing to say!

### GERTRUDE

Let me speak a few words to her.

# VERNON (aside)

What possible motive can there be for a young child to

keep silence, when she is the victim of such an act of treachery as this?

# GERTRUDE (in a low voice to Pauline)

So you see, Pauline, you didn't long keep in your possession the proofs which you intended taking to your father in your ridiculous accusation of me!

### PAULINE

I understand all; you gave me a narcotic in order to deprive me of them.

### GERTRUDE

We are equally inquisitive. I have done to you what you did to me in Ferdinand's apartments.

### PAULINE

You are triumphant now, madame, but it will soon be my turn.

## GERTRUDE

The war, then, is to continue?

# PAULINE

War, madame? Call it a duel! One or the other of us must go.

## GERTRUDE

You are tragic.

# VERNON (aside)

There appears to be no outbreak between them, nor the least misunderstanding!—But stay, an idea strikes me; suppose I go and look for Ferdinand? (He prepares to go out.)

## GERTRUDE

Doctor!

VERNON

Madame?

GERTRUDE

We must have a talk together. (Whispering) I shall not leave you until you have given me back—

VERNON

I stated to you the sole condition-

PAULINE

Doctor!

VERNON (going to her)

My child?

PAULINE

Are you aware that my sleep just now was not a natural one?

VERNON

Yes, you were put to sleep by your stepmother. I have proof of it. But do you know the reason why?

PAULINE

Oh! doctor, it is-

GERTRUDE

Doctor!

PAULINE

Later on, I will tell you all.

VERNON

Already from each one of them I have learned something of what lies beneath. Ah! poor General!

GERTRUDE

I am waiting, doctor. (He bows and escorts Gertrude out.)

## SCENE THIRD.

# Pauline (alone; she rings)

Yes, the only alternative left me is to flee with him; if we continue this conflict, my stepmother and I, it can but result in my father's dishonor. Would it not be better to disobey him? Then I will write to him—I will be generous, because my triumph over her will be complete—I will let my father still believe in her, and will explain my flight by attributing it to the hatred which he bears to the name of Marcandal and to my love for Ferdinand.

## SCENE FOURTH.

## PAULINE AND MARGUERITE.

### MARGUERITE

Does mademoiselle feel well again?

## PAULINE

Yes, I am well enough in body; but in mind—Oh, I am in despair! My poor Marguerite, unfortunate is the girl who has lost her mother—

# MARGUERITE

And whose father has for his second wife such a woman as Madame de Grandchamp. But tell me, mademoiselle, am I not to you a humble and devoted mother? My affection for you as a nurse has grown in proportion to the hate with which this stepmother regards you.

# PAULINE

Yes, Marguerite, you may believe it, but you delude yourself. Your love can never be as great as her hatred.

### MARGUERITE

Oh! mademoiselle! If you would only put me to the proof!

### PAULINE

Really?—Would you leave France for me?

### MARGUERITE

To be with you, I would travel to the Indies.

## PAULINE

And would you start at once?

### MARGUERITE

At once!—My baggage is not heavy.

### PAULINE

Well, Marguerite, we will start to-night, and secretly.

## MARGUERITE

But why is this?

# PAULINE

You ask me why? Do you not know that Madame de Grandchamp put me to sleep with opium?

# MARGUERITE

I know it. mademoiselle, and Doctor Vernon knows it also, for Felix told me that he put under lock and key your teacup.—But why did she do it?

# PAULINE

Say not a word about it, if you love me! And if you are as devoted to me as you profess to be, go to your room and gather together all that you possess, so quietly that none shall suspect that you are preparing for a journey. We will start after midnight. You must now take from me here, and carry

to your room, my jewels and all that I shall need for a long journey. Use the utmost caution; for if my stepmother had the least idea of what we are doing, I should be ruined.

## MARGUERITE

Ruined!—But, mademoiselle, what is come over you? Think seriously before you leave your home.

### PAULINE

Do you wish to see me die?

### MARGUERITE

Die?—Oh, mademoiselle, I will at once obey your wishes.

## PAULINE

Marguerite, tell M. Ferdinand to bring me my year's allowance; bid him come this moment.

## MARGUERITE

He was under your windows when I came in.

# PAULINE (aside)

Under my windows!—doubtless he thought that he would never see me again.—Poor Ferdinand! (Exit Marguerite.)

# SCENE FIFTH.

# PAULINE (alone)

When I think of leaving my father's house, it at once comes home to me that my father will seek me many a day, far and wide.—With what treasures love ought to repay me, for such sacrifices, for I abandon to follow Ferdinand my country, my father, and my home! But at any rate, this

shameless woman will lose him without hope of restoration! Moreover, I shall return! The doctor and M. Ramel will win for me forgiveness from my father. I think I hear the step of Ferdinand!—Yes, it is actually he!

## SCENE SIXTH.

## PAULINE AND FERDINAND.

### PAULINE

Oh, my love, my Ferdinand!

### FERDINAND

And I thought that I should never see you again! Marguerite, I see, knows all.

### PAULINE

She knows nothing yet; but this night she shall learn of our flight, for we shall be free; and you shall take your wife with you.

### FERDINAND

Oh, Pauline, do not deceive me!

## PAULINE

I was making arrangements to rejoin you in your place of exile; but this odious woman has hurried on my resolution.—
There is no merit in what I am doing, it is a question of life and death to me.

## FERDINAND

Of life and death!—Tell me what has she been doing?

### PAULINE

She almost poisoned me; she drugged me, in order to take

the letters I carried about me! By what she has dared to do, in order to keep you for herself, I judge what she yet may do. If therefore we wish to be united, our only hope lies in flight. Therefore let us not say farewell! This night we must find some refuge or other—But where? That lies with you.

### FERDINAND

Ah! These words,—how wild with joy they make me!

### PAULINE

Ferdinand! Take every precaution; hurry to Louviers, go to the house of your friend, the prosecuting attorney; secure our passports, and a carriage with fast horses. I fear that my father, urged on by this stepmother, may try to overtake us! May he fail to do so; he would kill us, for I am telling him in this letter the fatal secret of your birth which compels me thus to leave him.

### FERDINAND

Dismiss your fears. Eugène completed his preparations for my departure yesterday. Here is the sum of money which your father owed me. (He shows her a pocket-book.) Give me your receipt. (He puts down some money on the table.) I have only to give in my balance sheet in order to be free. We shall reach Rouen in three hours, and at Havre we shall take an American ship. Eugène has sent a trusty man to secure me a passage on board. The officers of the vessel will think it only natural that a man should take his wife abroad with him, so we shall meet with no obstacle—

# SCENE SEVENTH.

THE SAME PERSONS AND GERTRUDE.

GERTRUDE

Excepting me.

### PAULINE

We are lost!

### GERTRUDE

So you are going to start without telling me, Ferdinand? Oh, indeed!—But I have heard it all.

# FERDINAND (to Pauline)

Mademoiselle, have the goodness to give me your receipt, it is indispensable in completing the account which I must give to your father before leaving. (To Gertrude) Madame, you may be able, perhaps, to prevent mademoiselle from going away; but I can no longer remain here, and I must absolutely start to-night.

### GERTRUDE

You must stay here, and you shall stay here, sir!

### FERDINAND

Against my will?

## GERTRUDE

What mademoiselle wishes to do, I myself will do, and without fear. I will make M. de Grandchamp come into this very room, and you will at once see that he will compel you to leave, but—with me and my child. (Felix appears.) Beg M. de Grandchamp to come here.

# FERDINAND (to Pauline)

I see her object. Detain her here, while I overtake Felix, and prevent him from speaking to the General! Eugène will tell you how you must act after my departure. When once we have left this place, Gertrude will be powerless to oppose us. (To Gertrude) Farewell, madame. You lately made an attack on Pauline's life, and by this act have broken the last ties that bound me to your friendship.

### GERTRUDE

You have nothing but accusations for me! But you do not know what mademoiselle intended telling her father concerning you and me.

### FERDINAND

I love her, and will love her all my life; I shall be able to defend her against you, and I prize her high enough to suffer banishment in order to obtain her. Farewell.

## PAULINE

Dear, dear Ferdinand!

## SCENE EIGHTH.

# GERTRUDE AND PAULINE.

### GERTRUDE

Now that we are alone, do you know why I have summoned your father? It is in order to tell him the name and family of Ferdinand.

#### PAULINE

Madame, what are you going to do? My father, as soon as he learns that the son of General Marcandal has won the love of his daughter, will get to Havre as quickly as Ferdinand does. He will come up with him, and then—

# GERTRUDE

I would sooner see Ferdinand dead than united to any one but myself, especially when I feel in my heart as much hatred for that other one as I have love for him. Such is my final word in our mortal duel.

### PAULINE

Madame, I am now at your feet, as you but now were at

mine. Let us slay each other if you like, but let us not murder him! Let his life be spared, though it be at the cost of mine!

## GERTRUDE

Will you give him up?

### PAULINE

I will, madame.

Gertrude (she lets her handkerchief fall in the excitement of her passionate speech)

You are deceiving me! You tell me this, because he loves you, because he has already insulted me by avowing it, and because you believe that he will not love me any longer. Now this will not do, Pauline, you must give me some pledges of your sincerity.

# PAULINE (aside)

Her handkerchief! Ah! I see with it the key of her desk.—It is there that the poison is locked up! (Aloud) Did you say pledges of my sincerity? I will give them to you.—What do you demand?

# GERTRUDE

Really, I do not care for more than one proof that you mean what you say, and that is, that you should marry the other suitor.

#### PAULINE

I will marry him.

## GERTRUDE

And you must, at this very moment, plight your troth with him.

## PAULINE

Go to him yourself, madame, and tell him; and then come here with my father, and—

### GERTRUDE

And what?—

### PAULINE

And I will give him my word; even though this be to give away my life.

# GERTRUDE (aside)

In what a tone she uttered that. With what resolution! And without tears—I feel sure she is keeping something back! (Aloud) And so you are quite resigned to this?

### PAULINE

I am.

# GERTRUDE (aside)

I hope she is. (To Pauline) If you are sincere—

### PAULINE

You are mendacity itself, and you always see a lie in other's words—Oh! Leave me, madame, you make me shudder.

# GERTRUDE (aside)

Well, she is candid at any rate. (Aloud) I am going to tell Ferdinand of your resolution—(Pauline nods in acquiescence.) But he will not believe me. Suppose you write a word to him?

# PAULINE

Yes, I will write to him, and tell him not to go away. (Sits down and writes.) Here is the letter, madame.

# GERTRUDE (reads)

"I am going to marry M. de Rimonville—so that you may remain here. Pauline." (Aside) I do not quite understand this—I fear that there is some trick in it. I am going to let him leave; he will learn of the marriage when he is far away from this. (Exit.)

### SCENE NINTH.

# PAULINE (alone)

Ferdinand is utterly lost to me now—I have always expected it; the world is either a paradise or a prison cell; and I, a young girl, have dreamed only of the paradise. But anyway I have the key of the desk, and I can return it after having taken out something which may serve to put an end to this terrible situation. Yes, that is what I will do!

## SCENE TENTH.

# PAULINE AND MARGUERITE.

### MARGUERITE

Mademoiselle, my trunks are all packed. I am now going to begin packing here.

## PAULINE

Yes. (Aside) It is best to let her do so. (Aloud) Come here, Marguerite, take this gold and conceal it among your things.

## MARGUERITE

You are sure that your reasons for starting away are very urgent?

# PAULINE

My poor Marguerite, who knows whether I shall be able to get away! But come, go on with your work. (Exit.)

# SCENE ELEVENTH.

# MARGUERITE (alone)

And to think that I believed this fury was unwilling that

mademoiselle should marry! Is it possible that mademoiselle should have concealed from me that her real love was being opposed? Yet her father is so good to her! He leaves her free to choose—Suppose I were to speak to the General—Oh! no, I would not run the risk of injuring my child.

## SCENE TWELFTH.

# MARGUERITE AND PAULINE.

### PAULINE

No one has seen me. Listen, Marguerite, first of all, take away the money that I gave you, and then let me think about the resolution which I have taken.

## MARGUERITE

If I were in your place, mademoiselle, I would tell everything to the General.

## PAULINE

To my father? Unhappy woman, do not betray me! And let both of us respect the illusions, in the midst of which he lives.

# MARGUERITE

Ah! Illusions! That is the very word.

# PAULINE

You may leave me now. (Exit Marguerite.)

# SCENE THIRTEENTH.

# PAULINE, THEN VERNON.

Pauline (holding in her hand the parcel of poison, which was shown in the first act)

Here stands death before me! The doctor told us yester-day, in reference to Champagne's wife, that this terrible substance required some hours, almost a whole night, to produce its deadly effects, and that it was possible, during the first hours, to nullify these effects; if the doctor remains at the house, he will provide this antidote. (Some one knocks.) Who is that?

VERNON (from without)

It is I.

#### PAULINE

Come in, doctor! (Aside) Curiosity brings him to see me, curiosity will take him away.

#### VERNON

I see, my child, that between you and your stepmother, there are secrets of life and death?

#### PAULINE

Yes, and, above all, death.

### VERNON

I was afraid so! And that, of course, I must attend to. But tell me—You must have had some terrible quarrel with your stepmother.

## PAULINE

Let me hear no more of that creature. She deceives my father.

VERNON

I know it.

PAULINE

She never loved him.

VERNON

I was quite sure of that!

PAULINE

She has sworn to ruin me.

VERNON

How? Is it in an affair of your heart that she wishes to do you harm?

PAULINE

Rather say, it is my life she threatens.

VERNON

What a horrible suspicion! Pauline, my child, I love you well, you know I do. Tell me, can nothing save you?

# PAULINE

In order to change my fate, it would be necessary that my father change his ideas. Listen; I am in love with M. Ferdinand.

VERNON

I already know that. But who would hinder you from marrying him?

PAULINE

Can you keep a secret? Well, he is the son of General Marcandal!—

# VERNON

My God! You may rely on my keeping that secret! Why, your father would fight with him to the death, if for nothing else, because he has had him under his roof for three years.

#### PAULINE

You will then see very plainly that there is no hope for me. (She sinks back overwhelmed with emotion in an armchair.)

### VERNON

Poor child! I fear she is going to faint! (He rings and calls) Marguerite! Marguerite!

## SCENE FOURTEENTH.

THE SAME PERSONS, GERTRUDE, MARGUERITE AND THE GENERAL.

MARGUERITE (running in)

What is it, sir?

#### VERNON

Get me a tea-urn of boiling water, into which you must drop some orange leaves.

GERTRUDE

What is the matter with you, Pauline?

THE GENERAL

Dear child, do tell us?

# GERTRUDE

Oh, it is nothing! We can understand her feelings. It is because she sees her lot in life decided—

VERNON (to the General)

Her lot decided? And in what way?

THE GENERAL

She is going to marry Godard! (Aside) It seems to me as

if she were giving up some love affair of which she did not wish to tell me. As far as I can understand from what my wife has told me, the unknown one is ineligible, and Pauline did not discover his unworthiness until yesterday.

### VERNON

And you believe this? Do not precipitate matters, General. We will talk it over this evening. (Aside) Before then I am going to have a few words with Madame de Grandchamp.

Pauline (to Gertrude)

The doctor knows all!

GERTRUDE

Ah!

Pauline (she puts back into the pocket of Gertrude the handkerchief and the key, while the latter is looking at Vernon, who converses with the General)

Keep him away, for he is capable of telling all he knows to the General. We must at least protect Ferdinand.

# GERTRUDE (aside)

She is right. (Aloud) Doctor, I have just been informed that Francis, one of our best workmen, is sick; he hasn't appeared this morning, and you might go and visit him.

# THE GENERAL

Francis? Oh! Vernon, you had better go and see him-

# VERNON

Doesn't he live at Pré-l'Evêque? (Aside) More than three leagues away.

THE GENERAL

Are you alarmed about Pauline?

### VERNON

It is simply an attack of nerves.

### GERTRUDE

I can take your place here, doctor, if that is so, can't I?—

### VERNON

Yes. (To the General) I'll undertake to say that Francis is about as sick as I am! The fact of it is, I see rather too much and my presence is not desired—

The General (in a rage)

What are you talking about? To whom do you refer?

### VERNON

Are you going to fly into a passion again? Do calm yourself, my old friend, or you will cause yourself eternal remorse.

THE GENERAL

Remorse?

VERNON

Just keep these people talking, till I return.

THE GENERAL

But-

GERTRUDE (to Pauline)

Tell me, how do you feel now, my sweet angel?

THE GENERAL

Just look at them.

VERNON

Ah! well, women stab each other with a smile and a kiss.

# SCENE FIFTEENTH.

THE SAME PERSONS (EXCEPT VERNON) AND MARGUERITE.

Gertrude (to the General, who seems as if he were bewildered by the last words of Vernon)

What is the matter with you?

The General (passing before Gertrude to the side of Pauline)

Nothing, nothing! Tell me, my little Pauline, is your engagement with Godard to be quite voluntary?

PAULINE

Quite voluntary.

GERTRUDE (aside)

Ah!

THE GENERAL

He will be here soon.

PAULINE

I am expecting him.

THE GENERAL (aside)

There is a tremendous amount of bitterness in her tone. (Marguerite appears with a tea-cup.)

# GERTRUDE

It is too soon, Marguerite, the infusion can't yet be strong enough! (She tastes it.) I must go and prepare it myself.

# MARGUERITE

I have always been in the habit of waiting upon Mlle. Pauline.

### GERTRUDE

What do you mean by speaking to me in this tone?

MARGUERITE

But-madame-

THE GENERAL

Maguerite, if you say another word, we shall fall out.

## PAULINE

Marguerite, you may just as well let Madame de Grandchamp have her way. (Gertrude goes out with Marguerite.)

## THE GENERAL

And so my little girl has not much confidence in the father who loves her so? Come now! Tell me why you so distinctly refused Godard yesterday, and yet, accept him to-day?

### PAULINE

I suppose it is a young girl's whim.

THE GENERAL

Are you in love with anybody else?

# PAULINE

It is because I am not in love with anybody else that I consent to marry your friend M. Godard! (Gertrude comes in with Marguerite.)

THE GENERAL

Ah!

# GERTRUDE

Take this, my darling, but be careful, for it is a little hot.

PAULINE

Thank you, mother!

## THE GENERAL

Mother!—Truly, this is enough to drive one crazy with perplexity!

### PAULINE

Marguerite, bring me the sugar basin! (While Marguerite goes out and Gertrude talks with the General, she drops the poison into the cup and lets fall the paper which contained it.)

Gertrude (to the General)

You seem to be indisposed?

## THE GENERAL

My dear, I cannot understand women; I am like Godard. (Marguerite comes back.)

GERTRUDE

You are like all other men.

Pauline (hurriedly drinking the poisoned cup)
Ah!

GERTRUDE

How are you now, my child?

PAULINE

I am better.

GERTRUDE

I am going to prepare another cup for you.

# PAULINE

Oh, no, madame, this will be quite enough! I would sooner wait for the doctor. (She sets down the empty cup on the table.)

## SCENE SIXTEENTH.

THE SAME PERSONS AND FELIX, THEN GODARD.

### FELIX

M. Godard asks if you will see him? (He looks inquiringly at Pauline.)

PAULINE

Certainly.

GERTRUDE (leaving the room)

What do you intend saying to him?

PAULINE

Wait and see.

# Godard (entering)

I am sorry that mademoiselle is indisposed. I did not know it. I will not intrude. (They offer him a chair.) Mademoiselle, allow me to thank you above all for the kindness you have shown in receiving me in this sanctuary of innocence. Madame de Grandchamp and your father have just informed me of something which would have overwhelmed me with happiness yesterday, but rather astonishes me to-day.

THE GENERAL

That is to say, M. Godard—

## PAULINE

Do not be hasty, father, M. Godard is right. You do not know all I said to him yesterday.

## GODARD

You are far too clever, mademoiselle, not to consider as quite natural the curiosity of an honorable young man, who has an income of forty thousand francs, besides his savings, to learn the reason why he should be accepted after a lapse of twenty-four hours from his rejection— For, yesterday, it was at this very hour—(He pulls out his watch) Halfpast five—

## THE GENERAL

What do you mean by all this? It looks as if you are not as much in love as you said you were. You have come here to complain of a charming girl at the very moment when she has told you—

### GODARD

I would not complain, if the subject were not marriage. Marriage, General, is at once the cause and the effect of sentiment.

## THE GENERAL

Pardon me, Godard, I am a little hasty, as you know.

# Pauline (to Godard)

Sir—(Aside) Oh, how I suffer! Sir, why should poor young girls—

## GODARD

Poor?—No, no, mademoiselle; you are not poor. You have four hundred thousand francs.

# PAULINE

Why should weak young girls—

### GODARD

Weak?

# PAULINE

Well, then, innocent young persons—be so very fastidious about the character of the man who presents himself as their lord and master? If you love me, will you punish yourself—will you punish me—because your love has been submitted to a test?

### GODARD

Of course, from that point of view-

## THE GENERAL

Oh! These women! These women!

### GODARD

You may just as well say, "These daughters."

### THE GENERAL

Yes, for I am quite sure that mine has more brains than I have.

### SCENE SEVENTEENTH.

THE SAME PERSONS, GERTRUDE AND NAPOLEON.

#### GERTRUDE

How has it turned out, M. Godard?

#### GODARD

Ah, Madame! General! My happiness is complete, and my dream fulfilled. For now I am to be admitted into a family like yours. To think that I—Ah! Madame! General! (Aside) I'd like to find out the mystery, for she has precious little love for me.

# NAPOLEON (entering)

Papa, I have won the school medal—Good-day, mamma—and where is Pauline? And so you are sick? Poor little sister!

I'll tell you something—I have found out where justice comes from.

## GERTRUDE

And who told you? Ah! see what a lovely boy he is!

### NAPOLEON

The master told me that justice came from God.

### GODARD

It is very plain that your master was not born in Normandy.

# Pauline (in a low voice to Marguerite)

O Marguerite! Dear Marguerite! Do send them all away.

### MARGUERITE

Gentlemen, Mlle. Pauline desires to take a little nap.

# THE GENERAL

Just so, Pauline, we will leave you, and you need not get up till dinner time.

# PAULINE

I will certainly get up then if I can. Father, kiss me before you go.

# THE GENERAL (kissing her)

My darling child! (To Napoleon) Come, my boy. (They all go out, except Pauline, Marguerite and Napoleon.)

# Napoleon (to Pauline)

And how is it you do not kiss me? Tell me what ails you?

### PAULINE

Oh! I am dying!

## NAPOLEON

Do people die? Pauline, what is death made of?

## PAULINE

Death—is made—like this—(she falls back into Marguerite's arms).

### MARGUERITE

Oh! My God! Help! Help!

# NAPOLEON

Oh! Pauline, you frighten me! (Running away.) Mamma! Mamma!

Curtain to the Fourth Act.

# ACT V.

# SCENE FIRST.

(The chamber of Pauline as before.)

PAULINE, FERDINAND AND VERNON.

(Pauline lies stretched upon her bed. Ferdinand holds her hand in an attitude of profound grief and despair. It is just before dawn and a lamp is burning.)

# VERNON (seated near the table)

I have seen thousands of dead men on the field of battle and in the ambulances, yet the death of this young girl under her father's roof moves me more profoundly than all those heroic sufferings. Death is perhaps a thing foreseen on the field of battle—it is even expected there; while here, it is not only the passing away of a single person, but a whole family is plunged in tears and fond hopes vanish. Here is this child, of whom I was so fond, murdered, poisoned—and by whom? Marguerite has rightly guessed the secret of this struggle between two rivals. It was impossible to refrain from communicating at once with the authorities. In the meantime, God knows I have used every effort to snatch this young life from the grave. (Ferdinand raises his head and listens to the doctor.) I have even brought this poison, which may act as an antidote to the other; but the princes of medical science should have been present to witness the experiment! No one man ought to venture upon such a throw of the dice.

FERDINAND (rises and approaches the doctor)

Doctor, when the magistrates arrive, will you explain this

experiment of yours; they will be sure to sanction it; and you may be sure that God, yes God, will hear me. He will work some miracle, He will give her back to me!

### VERNON

I should have ventured upon it before the action of the poison had wrought its full effects. If I did so now, I should be looked upon as the poisoner. No (he places a little flask upon the table), it would be useless now, and to give it with the most disinterested motives would be looked upon as a crime.

FERDINAND (after holding a mirror before Pauline's lips)
Anything, everything is yet possible; she still breathes.

VERNON

She will not live till daylight.

PAULINE

Ferdinand!

FERDINAND

She has just uttered my name.

## VERNON

The vitality of a girl of twenty-two is very tenacious! Moreover, she will preserve consciousness, even to her last gasp. She might possibly rise from her bed and talk with us, although the sufferings caused by this terrible poison are inconceivable.

## SCENE SECOND.

# THE SAME PERSONS AND THE GENERAL.

THE GENERAL (outside)

Vernon!

VERNON (to Ferdinand)

It is the General. (Ferdinand, overcome with grief, falls back on the arm-chair, where he is concealed by the curtains of the bed.) What do you want?

THE GENERAL

I want to see Pauline!

VERNON

If you take my advice, you will wait awhile; she is very much worse.

THE GENERAL (entering)

For that reason I shall come in.

VERNON

Do not come in, General. Listen to me!

THE GENERAL

No, no! Ah, how motionless, how cold she is, Vernon!

VERNON

Listen! General! (Aside) We must get him away somehow. (Aloud) There is but a faint hope of saving her.

THE GENERAL

You told me—You must have been deceiving me!

VERNON

My friend, we have to look this catastrophe in the face, as

we had to look towards the batteries through a shower of bullets! On such occasions, when I hesitated, you always went forward. (Aside) That is a good idea! (Aloud) You had better bring to her the consolations of religion.

## THE GENERAL

Vernon, I wish to see her, to give her my last kiss.

### VERNON

Be careful!

THE GENERAL (kissing her)

Oh! How icy cold she is!

### VERNON

That is a peculiarity of her sickness, General. Hurry to the priest's house, for in case my remedies fail, it is not right that your daughter, who has been reared as a Christian, should be forgotten by the Church.

# THE GENERAL

Ah! yes. I will go. (He moves towards the bed.)

VERNON (pointing towards the door) This way!

# THE GENERAL

I quite lose my head; I am distracted—O Vernon, work a miracle for us! You have saved so many people—and here you cannot save the life of my child!

#### VERNON

Come, come be off. (Aside) I must go with him, for if he meets the magistrates there will be more trouble still. (Exeunt.)

# SCENE THIRD.

# PAULINE AND FERDINAND.

PAULINE

Ferdinand!

### FERDINAND

Ah! My God! Can this be her last sigh? Pauline, you are my very life; if Vernon does not save you, I will follow you, and we shall still be united.

### PAULINE

I shall expire, then, without a single regret.

FERDINAND (takes up the flask)

That which would have saved you, if the doctor had arrived earlier, shall deliver me from life.

PAULINE

No, for you may still be happy.

FERDINAND

Never, without you.

PAULINE

Your words revive me.

# SCENE FOURTH.

THE SAME PERSONS AND VERNON.

FERDINAND

She speaks; her eyes once more are open.

#### VERNON

Poor child! There she falls asleep again. What shall the waking be? (Ferdinand sits down again and takes the hand of Pauline.)

### SCENE FIFTH.

THE SAME PERSONS, RAMEL, THE INVESTIGATING MAGISTRATE, A DOCTOR, A CORPORAL OF POLICE AND MARGUERITE.

## MARGUERITE

M. Vernon, the magistrates are here. M. Ferdinand, you must leave the room! (Exit Ferdinand.)

### RAMEL

Take care, corporal, that all the entrances of this house are guarded, and observe our orders! Doctor, can we remain here a few moments without danger to the sick lady?

### VERNON

She is asleep, sir; and it is her last slumber.

## MARGUERITE

Here is the cup into which the infusion was poured and which still has traces of arsenic; I perceived it there as soon as I took hold of it.

THE DOCTOR (examining the cup and tasting the contents)
It is evident that the liquid contains some poisonous substance.

# THE MAGISTRATE

Please to make an analysis of it. (He sees Marguerite pick-

ing up a small piece of paper from the ground.) What paper is that?

### MARGUERITE

Oh, it is nothing.

## RAMEL

In such cases as these, nothing is insignificant in the eyes of magistrates! Yes, gentlemen, we shall have to examine this paper later. What can have delayed M. de Grandchamp?

### VERNON

He is at the priest's house, but he will not stay there long.

# THE MAGISTRATE (to the doctor)

Have you made your examination yet, sir? (The two physicians converse together at the head of the bed.)

# Ramel (to the magistrate)

If the General returns, we must deal with him according to the circumstances. (Marguerite is weeping, kneeling at the foot of the bed; the two physicians, the judge and Ramel are grouped in the front of the stage.)

# RAMEL (to the doctor)

It is therefore your opinion, sir, that the illness of Mlle. de Grandchamp, whom we saw two days ago full of health, and even of happiness, is the result of a crime?

# THE DOCTOR

The symptoms of poisoning are undeniable.

## RAMEL

And are the remains of the poison contained in this cup so discernible, and present in such a quantity, as to furnish legal proof?

## THE DOCTOR

Yes, sir.

# THE MAGISTRATE (to Vernon)

This woman alleges, sir, that yesterday, at four o'clock, you prescribed for Mlle. de Grandchamp an infusion of orange leaves, as a soothing draught for the nervous excitement which followed upon an interview between the stepmother and her stepdaughter; she says, moreover, that Madame de Grandchamp, who had despatched you on an empty errand to a place four leagues away, had insisted upon preparing and giving everything to her daughter herself; is this true?

# VERNON

Yes, sir.

## MARGUERITE

When I persisted in my purpose of attending myself upon my young mistress, my poor master was incensed to the point of reproaching me.

# RAMEL (to Vernon)

Where did Madame de Grandchamp send you?

# VERNON

Everything is ominous in this mysterious affair. Madame de Grandchamp was so anxious to get me out of the way that she sent me three leagues to visit a sick man, who, I found when I reached his home, was drinking in the inn. I blamed Champagne for deceiving Madame de Grandchamp, and Champagne positively told me that the workman had not appeared at the factory, but that he himself knew nothing about his alleged sickness.

# FELIX.

Gentlemen, the clergy are here.

#### RAMEL

We can continue our proceedings in the drawing-room.

VERNON

This way, gentlemen, this way.

(Scene curtain.)

## SCENE SIXTH.

(The drawing-room.)

RAMEL, THE MAGISTRATE, THE SHERIFF'S OFFICER AND VERNON.

#### RAMEL

Here, then, is the result so far of our inquiry, in accordance with the evidence of Felix and Marguerite. Madame de Grandchamp, in the first place, administered to her step-daughter a dose of opium, and you, M. Vernon, who were present and saw the criminal attempt, managed to secure and lock up the cup.

#### VERNON

It is true, gentlemen, but—

#### RAMEL

How is it, M. Vernon, that when you witnessed this criminal attempt, you did not check Madame de Grandchamp in the fatal course which she was then pursuing?

#### VERNON

Believe me, gentlemen, I did everything which I thought could be done with prudence, and all that my long experience suggested was attempted by me.

# THE MAGISTRATE

Your conduct, sir, was peculiar, and you will be called upon

to explain it. You did your duty yesterday in preserving the cup as evidence; but why did you not go further?

## RAMEL

Pardon me, M. Cordier, this gentleman is advanced in years; he is an honest and trustworthy man. (He takes Vernon aside) You have found out, I suppose, the cause of this crime?

### VERNON

It springs from a rivalry between two women, who have been urged on to the most violent extremes by their reckless passions. And I was obliged to keep silence on the subject.

### RAMEL

I know the whole business.

VERNON

You! sir?

## RAMEL

Yes, and, like you, I have done everything to prevent this catastrophe; for Ferdinand was to leave this very night. I knew Mlle. Gertrude de Meilhac in former years, having met her at the house of my friend.

# VERNON

Oh! sir, show clemency! Have pity on an old soldier, crippled with wounds, and enslaved by delusions. He is in danger of losing both his daughter and his wife. Heaven grant he may not lose his honor also!

# RAMEL

We understand each other. So long as Gertrude does not make such admissions as force us to see the real situation, I shall endeavor to persuade the investigating magistrate—who is an extremely sagacious and honest man of ten years' experience—I shall try to make him believe that cupidity alone has influenced Madame de Grandchamp. You must assist me. (The magistrate approaches; Ramel nods to Vernon and puts on an expression of severity) Why did Madame de Grandchamp wish to drug her stepdaughter? You, who are the friend of the household, ought to know this.

### VERNON

Pauline was about to confide her secrets to me. Her stepmother thought that I was learning certain things which her interest required should be concealed; and that, sir, is doubtless the reason why she sent me to treat a workman who was in good health, and not to prevent help from being brought to Pauline, for Louviers is not so far off.

### THE MAGISTRATE

What forethought she has! She won't be able to escape, if we find the proofs of crime in her desk. She does not expect us here; she will be thunderstruck.

# SCENE SEVENTH.

THE SAME PERSONS, GERTRUDE AND MARGUERITE.

# GERTRUDE

I hear the strains of church music! What, is there another trial going on here? What can be happening? (She goes to the door of Pauline's chamber and starts back terrified, on the appearance of Marguerite.) Ah!

# MARGUERITE

They are offering prayers over the body of your victim!

GERTRUDE

Pauline! Pauline! Dead!

## THE MAGISTRATE

And it is you, madame, who have poisoned her.

### GERTRUDE

I! I! Ah! what is this? Am I asleep or awake? (To Ramel) Ah! How extremely fortunate for me is this meeting! For you know the whole affair, don't you? Do you believe me capable of a crime like this? What! Am I actually accused of it? Do you think that I would have made an attack upon her life? I, the wife of a veteran who is the soul of honor? I, the mother of a child, before whom I would not wish to be disgraced? Justice will vindicate me—Marguerite, let no one leave the room. Gentlemen, tell me what has taken place since yesterday evening, when I left Pauline slightly indisposed?

## THE MAGISTRATE

Madame, collect yourself! You stand before the tribunal of your country.

# GERTRUDE

You chill me with such words-

# THE MAGISTRATE

The administration of justice in France is the most perfect of criminal procedures. No traps are set, for justice proceeds, acts, and speaks with open face, for she is solely intent upon her mission, which is, the discovery of the truth. At the present moment, you are merely inculpated, and in me you must see your protector. But tell the truth, whatever it may be; the final result will be decided at a higher tribunal.

# GERTRUDE

Ah! sir, take me into her chamber, and in presence of Pauline I will cry out, what I cry out before you—I am guiltless of her death!—

# THE MAGISTRATE

Madame!-

## GERTRUDE

Sir, let us have none of those long phrases, with which you blind the eyes of people. I suffer pains unheard of! I weep for Pauline as though she were my child, and—I forgive her everything! What do you want with me? Proceed, and I will answer you.

RAMEL

What is it that you will forgive her?

GERTRUDE

I mean-

Ramel (in a low voice)

Be cautious in your replies.

GERTRUDE

You are right, for precipices yawn on every side!

THE MAGISTRATE (to the sheriff's officer)

Names and titles may be taken later; now write down the notes of the investigation, and the inquiry. (*To Gertrude*) Did you yesterday forenoon put opium into the tea of Mlle. de Grandchamp?

GERTRUDE

Ah! doctor—this is you.

RAMEL

Do not accuse the doctor. He has already too seriously compromised himself for you! Answer the magistrate!

GERTRUDE

It is true.

THE MAGISTRATE

Madame recognizes the cup and admits that she put opium

in it. That will be enough for the present, at this stage of the inquiry.

### GERTRUDE

Do you accuse me then of something further? What is it?

## THE MAGISTRATE

Madame, if you cannot free yourself from blame with regard to a later event, you may be charged with the crime of poisoning. We must now proceed to seek proofs either of your innocence or of your guilt.

## GERTRUDE

Where will you seek them?

## THE MAGISTRATE

From you! Yesterday you gave Mlle. de Grandchamp an infusion of orange leaves, in another cup which contained arsenic.

### GERTRUDE

Can it be possible!

# THE MAGISTRATE

The day before yesterday you declared that the key of your desk, in which the arsenic was locked, never left your possession.

# GERTRUDE

It is in my dress pocket.—

# THE MAGISTRATE

Have you ever made any use of that arsenic?

# GERTRUDE

No; you will find the parcel still sealed.

### RAMEL

Ah! madame, I sincerely hope so.

## THE MAGISTRATE

I very much doubt it; this is one of those audacious criminals—

GERTRUDE

The chamber is in disorder, permit me-

THE MAGISTRATE

No, no! All three of us will enter it.

RAMEL

Your innocence is now at stake.

GERTRUDE

Gentlemen, let us go in together.

## SCENE EIGHTH.

Vernon (alone)

My poor General! He kneels by the bed of his daughter; he weeps, he prays!—Alas! God alone can give her back to him.

# SCENE NINTH.

VERNON, GERTRUDE, RAMEL, THE MAGISTRATE AND THE SHERIFF'S OFFICER.

GERTRUDE

I scarce can believe my senses; I am dreaming—I am—

RAMEL

You are ruined, madame.

### GERTRUDE

Yes, sir—But by whom?

# THE MAGISTRATE (to the sheriff's officer)

Write down that Madame de Grandchamp having herself unlocked for us the desk in her bedchamber and having herself given into our hands the parcel sealed by M. Baudrillon, this parcel which two days ago was intact is found unsealed and from it has been taken a dose, more than sufficient to produce death.

### GERTRUDE

Death!—And I?

### THE MAGISTRATE

Madame, it was not without reason that I took from your desk this torn piece of paper. We have also picked up in Mlle. de Grandchamp's chamber a piece of paper, which exactly fits to it; and this proves that when you reached your desk, in that confusion which crime always brings upon criminals, you took up this paper to wrap up the dose, which you intended to mix with the infusion.

#### GERTRUDE

You said that you were my protector! And there, see now—

# THE MAGISTRATE

Give me your attention, madame. In face of such suspicions, I feel I shall have to change the writ of summons into a writ of bail or imprisonment. (He signs the document.) And now, madame, you must consider yourself under arrest.

# GERTRUDE

Of course, I will do all that you wish!—But you told me that your mission was to search for the truth—Oh! Let us search for it here—Let us search for it here!

### THE MAGISTRATE

Certainly, madame.

Gertrude (to Ramel; she is weeping)

O M. Ramel!

### RAMEL

Have you anything to say in your defence which would lead us to cancel this terrible sentence?

### GERTRUDE

Gentlemen, I am innocent of the crime of poisoning, and yet all is against me! I implore you, give me your help instead of torturing me!—And listen to me—Some one must have taken my key,—can you not understand? Some one must have come into my room—Ah! I see it all now— (To Ramel) Pauline loved as I loved; she has poisoned herself!

### RAMEL

For the sake of your honor, do not say that, without the most convincing proofs, otherwise—

# THE MAGISTRATE

Madame, is it true that, yesterday, you, knowing Doctor Vernon was to dine with you, sent him—

## GERTRUDE

Oh! you,—your questions are so many daggers at my heart! and yet you go on, you still go on.

# THE MAGISTRATE

Did you send him away to attend a workman at Prél'Evêque?

#### GERTRUDE

I did, sir.

## THE MAGISTRATE

This workman, madame, was found in a tavern, and in excellent health.

### GERTRUDE

Champagne had told me that he was sick

## THE MAGISTRATE

We have questioned Champagne, and he denies this, averring that he said nothing about sickness. The fact of it was, you wished to preclude the possibility of medical aid.

# GERTRUDE (aside)

It was Pauline! It was she who made me send away Vernon! O Pauline! You have dragged me down with yourself into the tomb, to which I sink bearing the name of criminal! No! No! No! (To Ramel) Sir, I have but one avenue of escape. (To Vernon) Is Pauline still alive?

VERNON (pointing to the General)
Here is my answer.

# SCENE TENTH.

THE SAME PERSONS AND THE GENERAL.

THE GENERAL (to Vernon)

She is dying, my friend! If I lose her, I shall never survive it.

# VERNON

My friend!

# THE GENERAL

It seems to me that there are a great many people here—

What must be done? Oh, try to save her! I wonder where Gertrude is. (They give him a seat.)

# Gertrude (sinking at the feet of the General)

My friend!—Poor father!—I would this instant I might be killed without a trial. (She rises.) No, Pauline has wrapped me in her shroud, I feel her icy hands about my neck. And yet I was resigned. Yes, I would have buried with me the secret of this terrible drama, which every woman should understand! But I am weary of this struggle with a corpse that holds me tight, and communicates to me the coldness and the stiffness of death! I have made up my mind that my innocence of this crime shall come forth victorious at the expense of somebody's honor; for never, never could I become a vile and cowardly poisoner. Yes, I shall tell the whole, dark tale.

THE GENERAL (rising from his seat and coming forward)

Ah! so you are going to say in the face of justice all that for two days you have concealed by such obstinate silence—vile and ungrateful creature, fawning liar!—you have killed my daughter. Are you going to kill me also?

## GERTRUDE

Ought I to keep silence?—Ought I to speak?

## RAMEL

General, be kind enough to retire. The law commands.

# THE GENERAL

The law? You represent the justice of men, I represent the justice of God, and am higher than you all! I am at once accuser, tribunal, sentence and executioner—Come, madame, tell us what you have to say?

GERTRUDE (at the General's feet)
Forgive me, sir—Yes—I am—

RAMEL (aside)

Oh, poor wretch!

# GERTRUDE (aside)

I cannot say it! Oh! for his honor's sake, may he never know the truth. (Aloud) I am guilty before all the world, but to you I say, and will repeat it to my last breath, I am innocent! And some future day the truth shall speak from out two tombs, the cruel truth, which will show to you that you also are not free from reproach, but from the very blindness of your hate are culpable in all.

#### THE GENERAL

I? I? Am I losing my senses? Do you dare to accuse me? (Perceiving Pauline.) Ah! Ah! My God!

## SCENE ELEVENTH.

THE SAME PERSONS, AND PAULINE (supported by Ferdinand).

## PAULINE

They have told me all! This woman is innocent of the crime whereof she is accused. Religion has at last taught me that pardon cannot be obtained on high except by those who leave it behind them here below. I took from Madame the key of her desk, I myself sought the poison. I myself tore off the paper to wrap it up, for I wished to die.

## GERTRUDE

O Pauline! Take my life, take all I love—Oh, doctor, save her!

# THE MAGISTRATE

Is this the truth, mademoiselle?

#### PAULINE

The truth, yes, for the dying alone speak it-

#### THE MAGISTRATE

We know then actually nothing about this business.

# Pauline (to Gertrude)

Do you know why I came to draw you from the abyss which had engulfed you? It is because Ferdinand spoke to me a word which brought me back from the tomb. He has so great a horror of being left with you in life that he follows me, and will follow me to the grave, where we shall rest together, wedded in death.

#### GERTRUDE

Ferdinand! Ah, my God! At what a price have I been saved!

#### THE GENERAL

But unhappy child, wherefore must you die? Am I not, have I ceased for one moment to be a good father? And yet they say that I am culpable.—

## FERDINAND

Yes, General, I alone can give the answer to the riddle, and can explain to you your guilt.

# THE GENERAL

You, Ferdinand, you to whom I offered my daughter, you who loved her—

# FERDINAND

My name is Ferdinand Comte de Marcandal, son of General Marcandal. Do you understand?

# THE GENERAL

Ah! son of a traitor! What could you bring to my home but death and treachery!—Defend yourself!—

#### FERDINAND .

Would you fight, General, with the dead? (He falls.)

Gertrude (rushes to Ferdinand with a cry)

Oh! (She recoils before the General, and approaches his daughter, then draws forth a phial, but immediately flings it away.) I will condemn myself to live for this old man! (The General kneels beside his dying daughter.) Doctor, what will become of him? Is he likely to lose his reason?

THE GENERAL (stammering like a man who has lost his speech)

I-I-I-

VERNON

General, what is it?

THE GENERAL

I—I am trying— to pray—for my daughter!

Final Curtain

# MERCADET

# A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

Presented for the First Time in Paris, at the Théâtre du Gymnase-Dramatique, August 24, 1851.



# PERSONS OF THE PLAY

MERCADET, a speculator.

MADAME MERCADET, his wife.

JULIE, their daughter.

MINARD, clerk of Mercadet.

VERDELIN, friend of Mercadet.

GOULARD,
PIERQUIN,
Creditors of Mercadet.

VIOLETTE,

MERICOURT, acquaintance of Mercadet.

DE LA BRIVE, suitor to Julie.

JUSTIN, valet,
THÉRÈSE, lady's-maid,
VIRGINIE, cook,

VARIOUS CREDITORS OF MERCADET.

Scene: Paris, in the house of Mercadet. Time, about 1845.)



# **MERCADET**

#### ACT I.

## SCENE FIRST.

(A drawing-room. A door in the centre. Side doors. At the front, to the left, a mantel-piece with a mirror. To the right, a window, and next it a writing table. Armchairs.)

JUSTIN, VIRGINIE AND THÉRÈSE.

Justin (finishing dusting the room)

Yes, my dears, he finds it very hard to swim; he is certain to drown, poor M. Mercadet.

VIRGINIE (her basket on her arm)
Honestly, do you think that?

# JUSTIN

He is ruined! And although there is much fat to be stewed from a master while he is financially embarrassed, you must not forget that he owes us a year's wages, and we had better get ourselves discharged.

# THÉRÈSE

Some masters are so frightfully stubborn! I spoke to the mistress disrespectfully two or three times, and she pretended not to hear me.

## VIRGINIE

Ah! I have been at service in many middle-class houses; (173)

but I have never seen one like this!—I am going to leave my stove, and become an actress in some theatre.

## JUSTIN

All of us here are nothing but actors in a theatre.

#### VIRGINIZ

Yes, indeed, sometimes one has to put on an air of astonishment, as if just fallen from the moon, when a creditor appears: "Didn't you know it, sir?"—"No."—"M. Mercadet has gone to Lyons."—"Ah!—He is away?"—"Yes, his prospects are most brilliant; he has discovered some coal-mines."—"Ah! So much the better!—When does he return?"—"I do not know." Sometimes I put on an expression as if I had lost the dearest friend I had in the world.

# Justin (aside)

That would be her money.

# VIRGINIE (pretending to cry)

"Monsieur and mademoiselle are in the greatest distress. It seems that we are going to lose poor Madame Mercadet.—They have taken her away to the waters!—Ah!"

# THÉRÈSE

And then, there are some creditors who are actual brutes! They speak to you as if you were the masters!

# VIRGINIE

There's an end of it.—I ask them for their bill and tell them I am going to settle.—But now, the tradesmen refuse to give anything without the money! And you may be sure that I am not going to lend any of mine.

## JUSTIN

Let us demand our wages.

## VIRGINIE AND THÉRÈSE

Let us demand our wages.

#### VIRGINIE

Who are middle-class people?—Middle-class people are those who spend a great deal on their kitchen—

#### JUSTIN

Who are devoted to their servants—

#### VIRGINIE

And who leave them a pension. That is how middle-class people ought to behave to their servants.

## THÉRÈSE

The lady of Picardy speaks well.—But all the same, I pity mademoiselle and young Minard, her suitor.

## JUSTIN

M. Mercadet is not going to give his daughter to a miserable bookkeeper who earns no more than eighteen hundred francs a year;—he has better views for her than that.

# THÉRÈSE AND VIRGINIE.

Who is the man he thinks of?

# JUSTIN

Yesterday two fine young gentlemen came here in a carriage, and their groom told old Gruneau that one of them was going to marry Mlle. Mercadet.

## VIRGINIE

You don't mean to say so! Are those gentlemen in yellow gloves, with fine flowered waistcoats, going to marry mademoiselle?

## JUSTIN

Not both of them, lady of Picardy.

#### VIRGINIE

The panels of their carriage shone like satin.—Their horse had rosettes here. (She points to her ears.) It was held by a boy of eight, fair, with frizzed hair and top boots. He looked as sly as a mouse—a very Cupid, though he swore like a trooper. His master is as fine as a picture, with a big diamond in his scarf. It ain't possible that a handsome young man, who owns such a turnout as that is going to be the husband of Mlle. Mercadet? I can't believe it!

#### JUSTIN

You don't know M. Mercadet! I, who have been in his house for the last six years, and have seen him since his troubles fighting with his creditors, can believe him capable of anything, even of growing rich; sometimes I say to myself he is utterly ruined! Yellow auction placards flame at his door. He receives reams of stamped creditor's notices, which I sell by the pound for waste paper without being noticed.— But presto! Up he bobs again.—He is triumphant. what devices he has!—There is a new one every day! First of all, it is a scheme for wooden pavements—then it is dukedoms, ponds, mills. I don't know where the leakage is in his cash box; he finds it so hard to fill; for it empties itself as easily as a drained wine-glass! And always crowds of creditors!—How well he turns them away!—Sometimes I have seen them come with the intention of carrying off everything and throwing him into prison. But when he talks to them they end by being the best of friends, and part with cordial handshakes! There are some men who can tame jackals and lions. That's not a circumstance; M. Mercadet can tame creditors!

# THÉRÈSE

One of them is not quite so easily managed; and that is M. Pierquin.

#### JUSTIN

He is a tiger who feeds on bankrupts. And to think of poor old Violette!

#### VIRGINIE

He is both creditor and beggar—I always feel inclined to give him a plate of soup.

JUSTIN

And Goulard!

## THÉRÈSE

A bill discounter who would like very much to—to discount me.

VIRGINIE (amid a general laugh)

I hear madame coming.

## JUSTIN

Let us keep a civil tongue in our heads, and we shall learn something about the marriage.

# SCENE SECOND.

THE SAME PERSONS AND MME. MERCADET.

# MME. MERCADET

Justin, have you executed the commissions I gave you?

# JUSTIN

Yes, madame, but they refused to deliver the dresses, the hats, and indeed all the things you ordered until—

## VIRGINIE

And I also have to inform madame that the tradesmen are no longer willing—

# MME. MERCADET

I understand.

## JUSTIN

The creditors are the cause of the whole trouble. I wish I knew how to get even with them.

#### MME. MERCADET

The best way to do so would be to pay them.

## JUSTIN

They would be mightily surprised.

#### MME. MERCADET

It is useless to conceal from you the excessive anxiety which I suffer over the condition of my husband's affairs. We shall doubtless be in need of your discretion—for we can depend upon you, can we not?

#### ALL

You need not mention it, madame.

#### VIRGINIE

We were just saying, what excellent employers we had.

## THÉRÈSE

And that we would go through fire and water for you!

## JUSTIN

We were saying—(Mercadet appears unnoticed.)

# MME. MERCADET

Thank you all, you are good creatures—(Mercadet shrugs his shoulders.) Your master needs only time, he has so many schemes in his head!—a rich suitor has offered himself for Mlle. Julie, and if—

## SCENE THIRD.

THE SAME PERSONS AND MERCADET.

Mercadet (interrupting his wife)

My dearest! (The servants draw back a little. In a low voice to madame) And so this is how you speak to the servants! To-morrow they laugh at us. (To Justin) Justin, go at once to M. Verdelin's house, and ask him to come here, as I want to speak to him about a piece of business that will not admit of delay. Assume an air of mystery, for I must have him come. You, Thérèse, go to the tradesmen of Madame de Mercadet, and tell them, sharply, that they must send the things that have been ordered.—They will be paid for—yes—and cash, too—go at once. (Justin and Thérèse start.) Ah!—(They stop.) If—these people come to the house again, ask them to enter. (Mme. Mercadet takes a seat.)

JUSTIN

These—these people?—

Thérèse and Virginie.

These people? Eh!

MERCADET

Yes, these people—these creditors of mine!—

MME. MERCADET

How is this, my dear?

Mercadet (taking a seat opposite his wife)

I am weary of solitude—I want their society. (To Justin and Thérèse) That will do. (They leave the room.)

## SCENE FOURTH.

MERCADET, MME. MERCADET AND VIRGINIE.

MERCADET (to Virginie)

Has madame given you any orders?

VIRGINIE

No, sir, and besides the tradespeople—

## MERCADET

I hope you will do yourself credit to-day. We are going to have four people to dinner—Verdelin and his wife, M. de Mericourt and M. de la Brive—so there will be seven of us. Such dinners are the glory of great cooks! You must have a fine fish after the soup, then two entrées, very delicately cooked—

VIRGINIE

But, sir, the trades—

MERCADET

For the second course—ah, the second course ought to be at once rich and brilliant, yet solid. The second course—

VIRGINIE

But the tradespeople—

MERCADET

Nonsense! You annoy me—To talk about tradespeople on the day when my daughter and her intended are to meet!—

VIRGINIE

They won't supply anything.

MERCADET

What have we got to do with tradespeople that won't take

our trade? We must get others. You must go to their competitors, you must give them my custom, and they will tip you for it.

#### VIRGINIE

And how shall I pay those that I am giving up?

#### MERCADET

Don't worry yourself about that,—it is my business.

#### VIRGINIE

But if they ask me to pay them-

# MERCADET (aside, rising to his feet)

This girl has money of her own. (Aloud) Virginie, in these days, credit is the sole wealth of government. My tradespeople misunderstand the laws of their country, they will show themselves unconstitutional and utter radicals, unless they leave me alone.—Don't you trouble your head about people who raise an insurrection against the vital principles of all rightly constituted states! What you have got to attend to, is dinner,—that is your duty, and I hope that on this occasion you will show yourself to be what you are, a first-class cook!—And if Mme. Mercadet, when she settles with you on the day after my daughter's wedding, finds that she owes you anything, I will hold myself liable for it all.

# VIRGINIE (hesitating)

Sir-

## MERCADET

Now go about your business. I give you here an opportunity of gaining an interest of ten per cent every six months!—and that is better than the savings banks will do for you.

#### VIRGINIE

That it is; they only give four per cent a year!

# MERCADET (whispering to his wife)

What did I tell you!—(To Virginie) How can you run the risk of putting your money into the hands of strangers—You are quite clever enough to invest it yourself, and here your little nest-egg will remain in your own possession.

#### VIRGINIE

Ten per cent every six months!—I suppose that madame will give me the particulars with regard to the second course. I must start to work on it. (*Exit*.)

## SCENE FIFTH.

# MERCADET AND MME. MERCADET.

MERCADET (watching Virginie as she goes out)

That girl has a thousand crowns of our good money in the savings bank, so that we needn't worry about the kitchen for awhile.

# MME. MERCADET

Ah! sir, how can you stoop to such a thing as this?

# MERCADET

Madame, these are mere petty details; don't bother about the means to the end. You, a little time ago, were trying to control your servants by kindness, but it is necessary to command and compel them, and to do it briefly, like Napoleon.

## MME. MERCADET

How can you order them when you don't pay them?

## MERCADET

You must pay them by a bluff.

## MME. MERCADET

Sometimes you can obtain by affection what is not attainable by—

## MERCADET

By affection! Ah! Little do you know the age in which we live—To-day, madame, wealth is everything, family is nothing; there are no families, but only individuals! The future of each one is to be determined by the public funds. A young girl when she needs a dowry no longer appeals to her family, but to a syndicate. The income of the King of England comes from an insurance company. The wife depends for funds, not upon her husband, but upon the savings bank!—Debts are paid, not to creditors, but to the country, through an agency, which manages a sort of slave-trade in white people! All our duties are arranged by coupons—The servants which we exchange for them are no longer attached to their masters, but if you hold their money they will be devoted to you.

## MME. MERCADET

Oh, sir, you who are so honorable, so upright, sometimes say things to me which—

# MERCADET

And what is said may also be done, that is what you mean, isn't it? Undoubtedly I would do anything to save myself, for (he pulls out a five-franc piece) this represents modern honor. Do you know why the dramas that have criminals for their heroes are so popular? It is because all the audience flatter themselves and say, "at any rate, I am much better than that fellow!"

# MME. MERCADET

My dear!

# MERCADET

For my part I have an excuse, for I am bearing the burden of my partner's crime—of that fellow Godeau, who absconded,

carrying with him the cash box of our house!—And besides that, what disgrace is it to be in debt? What man is there who does not owe his father his existence? He can never repay that debt. The earth is constantly bankrupt to the sun. Life, madame, is a perpetual loan! Am I not superior to my creditors? I have their money, when they can only expect mine. I do not ask anything of them, and yet they are constantly importuning me.—A man who does not owe anything is not thought about by any one, while my creditors take a keen interest in me.

## MME. MERCADET

They take rather too much! To owe and to pay is well enough—but to borrow without any prospect of returning—

## MERCADET

You feel a great deal of compassion for my creditors, but our indebtedness to them springs from—

## MME. MERCADET

Their confidence in us, sir.

# MERCADET

No, but from their greed of gain! The speculator and the broker are one and the same—each of them aims at sudden wealth. I have done a favor to all my creditors, and they all expect to get something out of me! I should be most unhappy but for the secret consciousness I have that they are selfish and avaricious—so that you will see in a few moments how I will make each of them play out his little comedy. (He sits down.)

# MME. MERCADET

You have actually ordered them to be admitted?

# MERCADET

That I may meet them as I ought to !—(taking her hand.)

I am at the end of my resources; the time has come for a master-stroke, and Julie must come to our assistance.

#### MME. MERCADET

What, my daughter!

#### MERCADET

My creditors are pressing me, and harassing me. I must manage to make a brilliant match for Julie. This will dazzle them; they will give me more time. But in order that this brilliant marriage may take place, these gentlemen must give me more money.

## MME, MERCADET

They give you more money!

## MERCADET

Isn't there need of it for the dresses which they are sending to you, and for the trousseau which I am giving? And a suitable trousseau to go with the dowry of two hundred thousand francs, will cost fifteen thousand.

# MME. MERCADET

But you are utterly unable to give such a dowry.

# MERCADET (rising)

All the more reason why I should give the trousseau. Now this is what we stand in need of: twelve or fifteen thousand francs for the trousseau, and a thousand crowns to pay the tradesmen and to prevent any appearance of straitened circumstances in our house, when M. de la Brive arrives.

# MME. MERCADET

How can you count on your creditors for that?

### MERCADET

Don't they now belong to the family? Can you find any

relation who is as anxious as they are to see me wealthy and rich? Relations are always a little envious of the happiness or the wealth which comes to us; the creditor's joy alone is sincere. If I were to die, I should have at my funeral more creditors than relations, and while the latter carried their mourning in their hearts or on their heads, the former would carry it in their ledgers and purses. It is here that my departure would leave a genuine void! The heart forgets, and crape disappears at the end of a year, but the account which is unpaid is ineffaceable, and the void remains eternally unfilled.

## MME. MERCADET

My dear, I know the people to whom you are indebted, and I am quite certain that you will obtain nothing from them.

#### MERCADET

I shall obtain both time and money from them, rest assured of that. (*Mme. Mercadet is perturbed.*) Don't you see, my dear, that creditors when once they have opened their purses are like gamblers who continue to stake their money in order to recover their first losses? (*Growing excited.*) Yes! they are inexhaustible gold mines! If a man has no father to leave him a fortune, he finds his creditors are so many indefatigable uncles.

# Justin (entering)

M. Goulard wishes to know if it is true that you desire to see him?

# MERCADET (to his wife)

My message astounded him. (To Justin) Beg him to come in. (Justin goes out.) Goulard! The most intractable of them all!—who has three bailiffs in his employ. But fortunately he is a greedy though timid speculator who engages in the most risky affairs and trembles all the time they are being conducted.

#### MERCADET

# Justin (announcing)

M. Goulard! (Exit Justin.)

## SCENE SIXTH.

THE SAME PERSONS AND GOULARD.

GOULARD (in anger)

Ah! you can be found, sir, when you want to be!

MME. MERCADET (aside to her husband)
My dear, how angry he seems!

MERCADET (making a sign that she should be calm)
This is one of my creditors, my dear.

#### GOULARD

Yes, and I shan't leave this house until you pay me.

# MERCADET (aside)

You shan't leave this house until you give me some money—(Aloud) Ah! you have persecuted me most unkindly—me, a man with whom you have had such extensive dealings!—

## GOULARD

Dealings which have not always been to my advantage.

## MERCADET

All the more credit to you, for if advantages were the sole results of business, everybody would become a money-lender.

#### GOULARD

I hope you haven't asked me to come here, in order to show

me how clever you are! I know that you are cleverer than I am, for you have got over me in money matters.

## MERCADET

Well, money matters have some importance. (To his wife) Yes, yes, you see in this man one who has hunted me as if I were a hare. Come, come, Goulard, admit it, you have behaved badly. Anybody but myself would have taken vengeance on you—for of course I could cause you to lose a considerable sum of money.

## GOULARD

So you could, if you didn't pay me; but you shall pay me—your obligations are now in the hands of the law.

## MME. MERCADET

Of the law?

## MERCADET

Of the law! You are losing your senses, you don't know what you are doing, you are ruining us both—yourself and me—at the same time.

# Goulard (anxiously)

How?—You—that of course is possible—but—but—me?

## MERCADET

Both of us, I tell you!—Quick, sit down there—write, write—!

Goulard (mechanically taking the pen)

Write—write what?

# MERCADET

Write to Delannoy that he must make them stay the proceedings, and give me the thousand crowns which I absolutely need.

# GOULARD (throwing down the pen)

That is very likely, indeed!

## MERCADET

You hesitate, and, when I am on the eve of marrying my daughter to a man immensely wealthy—that is the time you choose to cause my arrest. And by that means you are killing both your capital and interest!

#### GOULARD

Ah! you are going to marry your daughter-

### MERCADET

To the Comte de la Brive; he possesses as many thousand francs as he is years old!

#### GOULARD

Then if he is up in years, there is reason for giving you some delay. But the thousand crowns—the thousand crowns—never.—I am quite decided on that point. I will give you nothing, neither delay nor—I must go now—

# MERCADET (with energy)

Very well! You can go if you like, you ungrateful fellow!
—But don't forget that I have done my best to save you.

# GOULARD (turning back)

Me?—To save me—from what?

# MERCADET (aside)

I have him now. (Aloud) From what?—From the most complete ruin.

#### GOULARD

Ruin? It is impossible.

# Mercadet (taking a seat)

What is the matter with you? You, a man of intelligence, of ability—a strong man, and yet you cause me all this trouble! You came here and I felt absolutely enraged against you—not because I was your friend, I confess it, but through selfishness. I look upon our interests as identical. I said to myself: I owe him so much that he is sure to give me his assistance when I have such a grand chance—like the one at this moment! And you are going to let out the whole business and to lose everything for the sake of a paltry sum! Everything! You are perhaps right in refusing me the thousand crowns—It is better, perhaps, to bury them in your coffers with the rest. All right! Send me to prison! Then, when all is gone, you'll have to look somewhere else for a friend!

# Goulard (in a tone of self-reproach)

Mercadet !—my dear Mercadet !—But is it actually true?

# Mercadet (rising from his seat)

Is it true? (To his wife) You would not believe he was so stupid. (To Goulard) She has ended by becoming a daring speculator. (To his wife) I may tell you, my dear, that Goulard is going to invest a large sum in our great enterprise.

# MME. MERCADET (ashamed)

Sir!

#### MERCADET

What a misfortune it will be if it does not turn out well.

#### GOULARD

Mercadet!—Are you talking about the Basse-Indre mines?

#### MERCADET

Of course I am. (Aside) Ah! You have some of the Basse-Indre stock, I see.

GOULARD

But the investment seems to me first-class.

MERCADET

First-class—Yes, for those who sold out yesterday.

GOULARD

Have any stockholders sold out?

MERCADET

Yes, privately.

GOULARD

Good-bye. Thanks, Mercadet; madame, accept my respects.

Mercadet (stopping him)

Goulard!

GOULARD

Eh?

MERCADET

What about this note to Delannoy?

GOULARD

I will speak to him about the postponement—

MERCADET

No; write to him; and in the meantime I will find some one who will buy your stock.

GOULARD (sitting down)

All my Basse-Indre? (He takes up the pen.)

Mercadet (aside)

Here you see the honest man, ever ready to rob his neighbor. (Aloud) Very well, write—ordering a postponement of three months.

GOULARD (writing)

Three months! There you have it.

MERCADET

The man I allude to, who buys in secret for fear of causing a rise, wants to get three hundred shares; do you happen to have three hundred?

GOULARD

I have three hundred and fifty.

MERCADET

Fifty more! Never mind! he'll take them all. (Examining what Goulard has written) Have you mentioned the thousand crowns?

GOULARD

And what is your friend's name?

MERCADET

His name? You haven't mentioned?—

GOULARD

His name!

MERCADET

The thousand crowns.

GOULARD

What a devil of a man he is! (He writes.) There, you have it!

MERCADET

His name is Pierquin.

GOULARD (rising)

Pierquin.

MERCADET

He at least is the nominal buyer.—Go to your house and I

will send him to you; it is never a good thing to run after a purchaser.

#### GOULARD

Never!—You have saved my life. Good-bye, my friend. Madame, accept my prayers for the happiness of your daughter. (Exit.)

#### MERCADET

One of them captured! Now watch me get the others!

## SCENE SEVENTH.

MME. MERCADET, MERCADET, THEN JULIE.

## MME. MERCADET

Is there any truth in what you just now said? I could not quite follow you.

## MERCADET

It is to the interest of my friend Verdelin to cause a panic in Basse-Indre stock; this stock has been for a long time very risky and has suddenly become of first-class value, through the discovery of certain beds of mineral, which are known only to those on the inside.—Ah! If I could but invest a thousand crowns in it my fortune would be made. But, of course, our main object at present is the marriage of Julie.

# MME. MERCADET

You are well acquainted with M. de la Brive, are you not?

# MERCADET

I have dined with him. He has a charming apartment, fine plate, a silver dessert service, bearing his arms, so that it could not have been borrowed. Our daughter is going to make a fine match, and he—when either one of a married couple is happy, it is all right. (Julie enters.)

## MME. MERCADET

Here comes our daughter. Julie, your father and I have something to say to you on a subject which is always agreeable to a young girl.

JULIE

M. Minard has then spoken to you, father?

## MERCADET

M. Minard! Did you expect, madame, to find a M. Minard reigning in the heart of your daughter? Is not this M. Minard that under clerk of mine?

JULIE

Yes, papa.

MERCADET

Do you love him?

JULIE

Yes, papa.

MERCADET

But besides loving, it is necessary for a person to be loved.

MME. MERCADET

Does he love you?

JULIE

Yes, mamma!

# MERCADET

Yes, papa; yes, mamma; why don't you say mammy and daddy?—As soon as daughters have passed their majority they begin to talk as if they were just weaned. Be polite enough to address your mother as madame.

JULIE

Yes, monsieur.

#### MERCADET

Oh! you may address me as papa. I shan't be annoyed at that. What proof have you that he loves you?

## JULIE

The best proof of all; he wishes to marry me.

## MERCADET

It is quite true, as has been said, that young girls, like little children, have answers ready enough to knock one silly. Let me tell you, mademoiselle, that a clerk with a salary of eighteen hundred francs does not know how to love. He hasn't got the time, he has to work too hard—

#### MME. MERCADET

But, unhappy child-

#### MERCADET

Ah! A lucky thought strikes me! Let me talk to her. Julie, listen to me. I will marry you to Minard. (Julie smiles with delight.) Now, look here, you haven't got a single sou, and you know it; what is going to become of you a week after your marriage? Have you thought about that?

# JULIE

Yes, papa—

MME. MERCADET (with sympathy, to her husband)
The poor child is mad.

## MERCADET

Yes, she is in love. (To Julie) Tell me all about it, Julie. I am not now your father, but your confidant; I am listening.

## JULIE

'After our marriage we will still love each other.

#### MERCADET

But will Cupid shoot you bank coupons at the end of his arrows?

## JULIE

Father, we shall lodge in a small apartment, at the extremity of the Faubourg, on the fourth story, if necessary!—And if it can't be helped, I will be his house-maid. Oh! I will take an immense delight in the care of the household, for I shall know that it will all be done for him. I will work for him, while he is working for me. I will spare him every anxiety, and he will never know how straitened we are. Our home will be spotlessly clean, even elegant—You shall see! Elegance depends upon such little things; it springs from the soul, and happiness is at once the cause and the effect of it. I can earn enough from my painting to cost him nothing and even to contribute to the expenses of our living. Moreover, love will help us to pass through days of hardship. Adolphe has ambition, like all those who are of lofty soul, and these are the successful men—

#### MERCADET

Success is within reach of the bachelor, but, when a man is married, he exhausts himself in meeting his expenses, and runs after a thousand franc bill as a dog runs after a carriage.

## JULIE

But, papa, Adolphe, has strength of will, united with such capacity that I feel sure I shall see him some day a Minister, perhaps—

# MERCADET

In these days, who is there that does not indulge more or less the hope of being a Minister? When a man leaves college he thinks himself a great poet, or a great orator! Do you know what your Adolphe will really become?—Why, the father of several children, who will utterly disarrange your plans of work and economy, who will end by landing his

excellency in the debtor's prison, and who will plunge you into the most frightful poverty. What you have related to me is the romance and not the reality of life.

## MME. MERCADET

Daughter, there can be nothing serious in this love of yours.

## JULIE

It is a love to which both of us are willing to sacrifice everything.

## MERCADET

I suppose that your friend Adolphe thinks that we are rich?

## JULIE

He has never spoken to me about money.

## MERCADET

Just so. I can quite understand it. (To Julie) Julie, write to him at once, telling him to come to me.

Julie (kissing him)

Dear papa!

# MERCADET

And you must marry M. de la Brive. Instead of living on a fourth floor in a suburb, you will have a fine house in the Chaussée-d'Antin, and, if you are not the wife of a Minister, you perhaps will be the wife of a peer of France. I am sorry, my daughter, that I have no more to offer you. Remember, you can have no choice in the matter, for M. Minard is going to give you up.

# JULIE

Oh! he will never do that, papa. He will win your heart—

## MME. MERCADET

My dear, suppose he loves her?

#### MERCADET

He is deceiving her-

## JULIE

I shouldn't mind being always deceived in that way. (A bell is heard without.)

## MME. MERCADET

Some one is ringing, and we have no one to open the door.

## MERCADET

That is all right. Let them ring.

## MME. MERCADET

I am all the time thinking that Godeau may return.

## MERCADET

After eight years without any news, you are still expecting Godeau! You seem to me like those old soldiers who are waiting for the return of Napoleon.

# MME. MERCADET

They are ringing again.

# MERCADET

Julie, go and see who it is, and tell them that your mother and I have gone out. If any one is shameless enough to disbelieve a young girl—it must be a creditor—let him come in. (Exit Julie.)

# MME. MERCADET

This love she speaks of, and which, at least on her side, is sincere, disturbs me greatly.

## MERCADET

You women are all too romantic.

# Julie (returning)

It is M. Pierquin, papa.

#### MERCADET

A creditor and usurer—a vile and violent soul, who humors me because he thinks me a man of resources; a wild beast only half-tamed yet cowed by my audacity. If I showed fear he would devour me. (Going to the door.) Come in, Pierquin, come in.

## SCENE EIGHTH.

THE SAME PERSONS AND PIERQUIN.

# PIERQUIN

My congratulations to you all. I hear that you are making a grand marriage for your daughter. Mademoiselle is to marry a millionaire; the report has already gone abroad.

# MERCADET

A millionaire?—No, he has only nine hundred thousand francs, at the most.

# PIERQUIN

This magnificent prospect will induce a lot of people to give you time. They are becoming devilishly tired of your talk about Godeau's return. And I myself—

# MERCADET

Were you thinking about having me arrested?

JULIE

'Arrested!

MME. MERCADET (to Pierquin)

Ah! sir.

# PIERQUIN

Now listen to me, you have had two years, and I never before let a bond go over so long; but this marriage is a glorious invention and—

MME. MERCADET

An invention!

MERCADET

Sir, my future son-in-law, M. de la Brive, is a young man-

# PIERQUIN

So that there is a real young man in the case? How much are you going to pay the young man?

MME. MERCADET

Oh!

MERCADET (checking his wife by a sign)

No more of this insolence! otherwise, my dear sir, I shall be forced to demand a settlement of our accounts—and, my dear M. Pierquin, you will lose a good deal of the price at which you sold your money to me. And at the rate of interest you charge, I shall cost you more than the value of a farm in Bauce.

PIERQUIN

Sir-

MERCADET (haughtily)

Sir, I shall soon be so rich that I will not endure to be twitted by any one—not even by a creditor.

PIERQUIN.

But—

MERCADET

Not a word—or I will pay you! Come into my private room and we will settle the business about which I asked you to come.

## PIERQUIN

I am at your service, sir. (Aside) What a devil of a man! (They bow to the ladies and enter Mercadet's room.)

MERCADET (following Pierquin; aside to his wife)
The wild beast is tamed. I'll get this one, too.

### SCENE NINTH.

MME. MERCADET, JULIE, AND LATER, SERVANTS.

#### JULIE

O mamma! I cannot marry this M. de la Brive!

#### MME. MERCADET

But he is rich, you know.

#### JULIE

But I prefer happiness and poverty, to unhappiness and wealth.

# MME. MERCADET

My child, happiness is impossible in poverty, while there is no misfortune that wealth cannot alleviate.

# Julie

How can you say such sad words to me?

## MME. MERCADET

Children should learn a lesson from the experience of parents. We are at present having a very bitter taste of life's vicissitudes. Take my advice, daughter, and marry wealth.

JUSTIN (entering, followed by Thérèse and Virginie)
Madame, we have carried out the master's orders.

VIRGINIE

My dinner will be ready.

THÉRÈSE

And the tradesmen have consented.

JUSTIN

As far as concerns M. Verdelin-

### SCENE TENTH.

THE SAME PERSONS AND MERCADET (carrying a bundle of papers)

MERCADET

What did my friend Verdelin say?

# JUSTIN

He will be here in a moment. He was just on his way here to bring some money to M. Bredif, the owner of this house.

# MERCADET

Bredif is a miliionaire. Take care that Verdelin speaks to me before going up to him. How did you get on, Thérèse, with the milliners and dressmakers?

# Thérèse

Sir, as soon as I gave them a promise of payment, every one greeted me with smiles.

# MERCADET

Very good. And shall we have a fine dinner, Virginie?

#### VIRGINIE

You will compliment it, sir, when you eat it.

And the tradespeople?

VIRGINIE

They will wait your time.

### MERCADET

I shall settle with you all to-morrow. You can go now. (They go out.) A man who has his servants with him is like a minister who has the press on his side!—

MME. MERCADET

And what of Pierquin?

MERCADET (showing the papers)

All that I could extort from him is as follows.—He will give me time, and this negotiable paper in exchange for stock.

—Also notes for forty-seven thousand francs, to be collected from a man named Michonnin, a gentleman broker, not considered very solvent, who may be a crook but has a very rich aunt at Bordeaux; M. de la Brive is from that district and I can learn from him if there is anything to be got out of it.

MME. MERCADET

But the tradesmen will soon arrive.

MERCADET

I shall be here to receive them. Now leave me, leave me, my dears. (Exeunt the two ladies.)

# SCENE ELEVENTH.

MERCADET, THEN VIOLETTE.

MERCADET (walking up and down)

Yes, they will soon be here! And everything depends upon

the somewhat slippery friendship of Verdelin—a man whose fortune I made! Ah! when a man has passed forty he learns that the world is peopled by the ungrateful—I do not know where all the benefactors have gone to. Verdelin and I have a high opinion of each other. He owes me gratitude, I owe him money, and neither of us pays the other. And now, in order to arrange the marriage of Julie, my business is to find a thousand crowns in a pocket which pretends to be empty—to find entrance into a heart in order to find entrance into a cashbox! What an undertaking! Only women can do such things, and with men who are in love with them.

# Justin (without)

Yes, he is in.

#### MERCADET

It is he. (Violette appears.) Ah! my friend! It is dear old Violette!

#### VIOLETTE

This is the eleventh call within a week, my dear M. Mercadet, and my actual necessity has driven me to wait for you three hours in the street; I thought the truth was told me when I was assured that you were in the country. But I came to-day—

# MERCADET

Ah! Violette, old fellow, we are both hard up!

# VIOLETTE

Humph! I don't think so. For my part, I've pledged everything I could put in the pawn-shop.

# MERCADET

So have we.

# VIOLETTE

I have never reproached you with my ruin, for I believe it is your intention to enrich me, as well as yourself; but still,

fine words butter no parsnips, and I am come to implore you to give me a small sum on account, and by so doing you will save the lives of a whole family.

#### MERCADET

My dear old Violette, you grieve me deeply! Be reasonable and I will share with you. (In a low voice) We have scarcely a hundred francs in the house, and even that is my daughter's money.

#### VIOLETTE

Is it possible! You, Mercadet, whom I have known so rich?

#### MERCADET

I conceal nothing from you.

#### VIOLETTE

Unfortunate people owe it to each other to speak the truth.

### MERCADET

Ah! If that were the only thing they owed how prompt would be the payment! But keep this as a secret, for I am on the point of making a good match for my daughter.

# VIOLETTE

I have two daughters, sir, and they work without hope of being married! In your present circumstances I cannot press you, but my wife and my daughters await my return in the deepest anxiety.

## MERCADET

Stay a moment. I will give you sixty francs.

### VIOLETTE

Ah! my wife and my girls will bless you. (Aside, while Mercadet leaves the room for a moment.) The others who abuse him get nothing out of him, but by appealing to his

pity, little by little I get back my money! (Chuckles and slaps his pocket.)

MERCADET (on the point of re-entering sees this action)

The beggarly old miser! Sixty francs on account paid ten times makes six hundred francs. Come now, I have sown enough, it is time to reap the harvest. (Aloud) Take this.

#### VIOLETTE

Sixty francs in gold! It is a long time since I have seen such a sum. Good-bye, we shan't forget to pray for the speedy marriage of Mlle. Mercadet.

## MERCADET

Good-bye, dear old Violette. (Holding him by the hand.) Poor man, when I look at you, I think myself rich—your misfortunes touch me deeply. And yesterday I thought I would soon be on the point of paying back to you not only the interest but the principal of what I owe you.

VIOLETTE (turning back)

Paying me back! In full!—

MERCADET

It was a close shave.

VIOLETTE

What was?

# MERCADET

Imagine, my dear fellow, that there exists a most brilliant opportunity, a most magnificent speculation, the most sublime discovery—an affair which appeals to the interest of every one, which will draw upon all the exchanges, and for the realization of which a stupid banker has refused me the miserable sum of a thousand crowns—when there is more than a million in sight.

#### VIOLETTE

A million!

### MERCADET

Yes, a million, from the start. Afterwards no one can calculate where the rage for protective pavement will stop.

VIOLETTE

Payment?

MERCADET

Protective pavement. A pavement on which no barricade can be raised.

VIOLETTE

Really!

### MERCADET

You see, that from henceforth all governments interested in the preservation of order will become our chief shareholders—Ministers, princes and kings will be our chief partners.— Next come the gods of finance, the great bankers, those of independent income in commerce and speculation; even the socialists, seeing that their industry is ruined, will be forced to buy stocks for a living from me!

VIOLETTE

Yes, it is fine! It is grand!

# MERCADET

It is sublime and philanthropic!—And to think that I have been refused four thousand francs, wherewith to send out advertisements and launch my prospectus!

VIOLETTE

Four thousand francs! I thought it was only-

MERCADET

Four thousand francs, no more! And I was to give away

for the loan a half interest in the enterprise—that is to say a fortune! Ten fortunes!

#### VIOLETTE

Listen—I will see—I will speak to some one—

#### MERCADET

Speak to no one! Keep it to yourself! The idea would at once be snatched up—or perhaps they wouldn't understand it so well as you have immediately done. These money dealers are so stupid. Besides, I am expecting Verdelin here—

#### VIOLETTE

Verdelin—but—we might perhaps—

#### MERCADET

'Twill be lucky for Verdelin, if he has the brains to risk six thousand francs in it.

### VIOLETTE

But you said four thousand just now.

### MERCADET

It was four thousand that they refused me, but I need six thousand! Six thousand francs, and Verdelin, whom I have already made a millionaire once, is likely to become so three, four, five times over! But he will deserve it, for he is a clever fellow, is Verdelin.

#### VIOLETTE

Mercadet, I will find you the money.

# MERCADET

No, no, don't think of it. Besides, he will be here in a moment, and if I am to send him away without concluding the business with him, it will be necessary to have it settled

with some one else before Verdelin comes—and, as that is impossible—good-bye—and good luck—I shall certainly be able to pay you your thirty thousand francs.

#### VIOLETTE

But say—why couldn't I—?

MME. MERCADET (entering)

M. Verdelin has come, my dear.

# MERCADET (aside)

Good, good! (Aloud) Just detain him a minute. (Mme. Mercadet goes out.) Well, good-bye, dear old Violette—

VIOLETTE (pulling out a greasy pocketbook)
Wait a moment—here, I have the money with me—and will
give it you beforehand.

#### MERCADET

You! Six thousand francs!-

### VIOLETTE

A friend asked me to invest it for him, and-

# MERCADET

And you couldn't find a better opening. We'll sign the contract presently! (He takes the bills.) This closes the deal—and so much the worse for Verdelin—he has missed a gold mine!

## VIOLETTE

Well, I'll see you later.

### MERCADET

Yes—see you later! You can get out through my study. (He shows him the way out. Mme. Mercadet enters.)

### MME. MERCADET

Mercadet!

# Mercadet (reappearing)

Ah! my dear! I am an unfortunate man! I ought to blow my brains out!

MME. MERCADET

Good heavens! What is the matter?

### MERCADET

The matter is that a moment ago I asked this sham bankrupt Violette for six thousand francs.

MME. MERCADET

And he refused to give them to you?

MERCADET

On the contrary, he handed them over.

MME. MERCADET

What, then, do you mean?

# MERCADET

I am an unlucky man, as I told you, because he gave them so quickly that I could have gotten ten thousand if I had only known it.

# MME. MERCADET

What a man you are! I suppose you know that Verdelin is waiting for you.

# MERCADET

Beg him to come in. At last I have Julie's trousseau; and we now need only enough money for your dresses and for household expenses until the marriage. Send in Verdelin.

#### MME. MERCADET

Yes, he is your friend, and of course you will gain your end with him. (She goes out.)

# MERCADET (alone)

Yes, he is my friend! And he has all the pride that comes with fortune; but he has never had a Godeau (looking round to see if he is alone). After all, Godeau! I really believe that Godeau has brought me in more money than he has taken from me.

### SCENE TWELFTH.

### MERCADET AND VERDELIN.

#### VERDELIN

Good-day, Mercadet. What is doing now? Tell me quickly for I was stopped here on my way up-stairs to Bredif's apartment.

### MERCADET

Oh, he can wait! How is it that you are going to see a man like Bredif?

# VERDELIN (laughing)

My dear friend, if people only visited those they esteem they would make no visits at all.

MERCADET (laughing and taking his hand)

A man wouldn't go even into his own house.

## VERDELIN

But tell me what you want with me?

Your question is so sudden that it hasn't left me time to gild the pill!

#### VERDELIN

Oh! my old comrade. I have nothing, and I am frank to say that even if I had I could give you nothing. I have already lent you all that my means permit me to dispose of; I have never asked you for payment, for I am your friend as well as your creditor, and indeed, if my heart did not overflow in gratitude towards you, if I had not been a man different from ordinary men, the creditor would long ago have killed the man. I tell you everything has a limit in this world.

#### MERCADET

Friendship has a limit, that's certain; but not misfortune.

#### VERDELIN

If I were rich enough to save you altogether, to cancel your debt entirely, I would do so with all my heart, for I admire your courage. But you are bound to go under. Your last schemes, although cleverly projected, have collapsed. You have ruined your reputation, you are looked upon as a dangerous man. You have not known how to take advantage of the momentary success of your operations. When you are utterly beggared, you will always find bread at my house; but it is the duty of a friend to speak these plain truths.

### MERCADET

What would be the advantage of friendship unless it gave us the pleasure of finding ourselves in the right, and seeing a friend in the wrong—of being comfortable ourselves and seeing our friend in difficulties and of paying compliment to ourselves by saying disagreeable things to him? Is it true then that I am little thought of on 'Change?

#### VERDELIN

I do not say so much as that. No; you still pass for an honest man, but necessity is forcing you to adopt expedients—

#### MERCADET

Which are not justified by the success which luckier men enjoy! Ah, success! How many outrageous things go to make up success. You'll learn that soon enough. Now, for instance, this morning I began to bear the market on the mines of Basse-Indre, in order that you may gain control of that enterprise before the favorable report of the engineers is published.

#### VERDELIN

Hush, Mercadet, can this be true? Ah! I see your genius there! (Puts his arm round him.)

#### MERCADET

I say this in order that you may understand that I have no need of advice, nor of moralizing,—merely of money. Alas! I do not ask any thing of you for myself, my dear friend, but I am about to make a marriage for my daughter, and here we are actually, although secretly, fallen into absolute destitution. You are in a house where poverty reigns under the appearance of luxury. The power of promises, and of credit, all is exhausted! And if I cannot pay in cash for certain necessary expenses, this marriage must be broken off. All I want here is a fortnight of opulence, just as all that you want is twenty-four hours of lying on the Exchange. Verdelin, this request will never be repeated, for I have only one daughter. Must I confess it to you? My wife and daughter are absolutely destitute of clothes! (Aside) He is hesitating.

# Verdelin (aside)

He has played me so many tricks that I really do not know whether his daughter is going to be married or not. How can she marry?

This very day I have to give a dinner to my future son-inlaw, whom a mutual friend is introducing to us, and I haven't even my plate remaining in the house. It is—you know where it is—I not only need a thousand crowns, but I also hope that you will lend me your dinner service and come and dine here with your wife.

#### VERDELIN

A thousand crowns!—Mercadet! No one has a thousand crowns to lend. One scarcely has them for himself; if he were to lend them whenever he was asked, he would never have them. (He retires to the fire-place.)

# Mercadet (following him, aside)

He will yet come to the scratch. (Aloud) Now look here, Verdelin, I love my wife and my daughter; these sentiments, my friend, are my sole consolation in the midst of my recent disasters; these women have been so gentle, so patient! I should like to see them placed beyond the reach of distress. Oh! It is on this point that my sufferings are most real! (They walk to the front of the stage arm in arm.) I have recently drunk the cup of bitterness, I have slipped upon my wooden pavement,—I organized a monopoly and others drained me of everything! But, believe me, this is nothing in comparison with the pain of seeing you refuse me help in this extremity! Nevertheless, I am not going to dwell upon the consequences—for I do not wish to owe anything to your pity.

# Verdelin (taking a seat)

A thousand crowns!—But what purpose would you apply them to?

# MERCADET (aside)

I shall get them. (Albud) My dear fellow, a son-in-law is a bird who is easily frightened away. The absence of one

piece of lace on a dress reveals everything to him. The ladies' costumes are ordered, the merchants are on the point of delivering them—yes, I was rash enough to say that I would pay for everything, for I counted on you! Verdelin, a thousand crowns won't kill you, for you have sixty thousand francs a year. And the life of a young girl of whom you are fond is now at stake—for you are fond of Julie! She has a sincere attachment for your little girl, they play together like the happiest of creatures. Would you let the companion of your daughter pine away with despair? Misfortune is contagious! It brings evil on all around!

#### VERDELIN

My dear fellow, I have not got a thousand crowns. I can lend you my plate; but I have not—

### MERCADET

You can give me your note on the bank. It is soon signed—

VERDELIN (rising)

I-no-

# MERCADET

Ah! my poor daughter! It is all over. (Falls back overcome in an armchair near the table.) God forgive me, if I put an end to the painful dream of life, and let me awaken in Thy bosom!

Verdelin (after a short silence)

But— Have you really found a son-in-law?

Mercadet (rising abruptly to his feet)

You ask if I have found a son-in-law!—You actually throw a doubt upon this! You may refuse me, if you like, the means of effecting the happiness of my daughter, but do not insult me!—I am fallen low indeed! O Verdelin! I would not for a thousand crowns have had such an idea of you, and you can never win absolution from me excepting by giving them.

# VERDELIN (wishing to leave)

I must go and see if I can—

#### MERCADET

No! This is only another way of refusing me!—Can I believe it? Will not you whom I have seen spend the same sum upon some such trifle as a passing love affair—will you not apply a thousand crowns to the performance of a good action?

# VERDELIN (laughing)

At the present time there are very few good actions, or transactions.

#### MERCADET

Ha! ha! ha! How witty!—You are laughing, I see there is a reaction!

#### VERDELIN

Ha! ha! ha! (He drops his hat.)

MERCADET (picking up the hat and dusting it with his sleeve)
Come now, old fellow. Haven't we seen life! We two began it together. What a lot of things we have said and done!—Don't you recollect the good old time when we swore to be friends always through thick and thin?

### VERDELIN

Indeed, I do. And don't you recollect our party at Rambouillet, where I fought with an officer of the Guard on your account?

# MERCADET

I thought it was for the lovely Clarissa! Ah! But we were gay!—We were young!—And to-day we have our daughters, daughters old enough to marry! If Clarissa were alive now, she would blame your hesitation!

#### VERDELIN

If she had lived, I should never have married.

### MERCADET

Because you know what love is, that you do!—So I may count upon you for dinner, and you give me your word of honor that you will send me—

VERDELIN

The plate?

MERCADET

And the thousand crowns-

### VERDELIN

Ah! You still harp upon that!—I have told you that I cannot do it.

# MERCADET (aside)

It is certain that this fellow will never die of heart failure. (Aloud) And so it seems I am to be murdered by my best friend? Alas! It is always thus! You are actually untouched by the memory of Clarissa—and by the despair of a father! (He cries out towards the chamber of his wife.) Ah! it is all over!—I am in despair! I am going to blow my brains out!

# SCENE THIRTEENTH.

THE SAME PERSONS, MME. MERCADET AND JULIE.

MME, MERCADET

What on earth is the matter with you, my dear?

JULIE

How your voice frightened us, papa!

They heard us! See how they come, like two guardian angels! (He takes them by the hand.) Ah! you melt my heart! (To Verdelin) Verdelin! do you wish to slay a whole family? This proof of their tenderness gives me courage to fall at your feet.

### JULIE

Oh, sir! (She checks her father.) It is I who will implore you for him. Whatever may be his demand, do not refuse my father; he must, indeed, be in the most terrible anguish!

### MERCADET

Dear child! (Aside) In what accents does she speak! I couldn't speak so naturally as that.

## MME. MERCADET

M. Verdelin, listen to us—

Verdelin (to Julie)

You don't know what he is asking, do you?

JULIE

No.

## VERDELIN

He is asking for a thousand crowns, in order to arrange your marriage.

# JULIE

Then, forget, sir, all that I said to you; I do not wish for a marriage which has been purchased by the humiliation of my father.

MERCADET (aside)

She is magnificent!

# VERDELIN

Julie!—I will go at once and get the money for you. (Exit.)

# SCENE FOURTEENTH.

THE SAME PERSONS, EXCEPT VERDELIN; THEN THE SERVANTS.

### JULIE

Oh, father! Why did you not tell me?

# Mercadet (kissing her)

You have saved us all! Ah! when shall I be so rich and powerful that I may make him repent of a favor done so grudgingly?

### MME. MERCADET

Do not be unjust; Verdelin yielded to your request.

### MERCADET

He yielded to the cry of Julie, not to my request. Ah! my dear, he has extorted from me more than a thousand crowns' worth of humiliation!

Justin (coming in with Thérèse and Virginie)
The tradespeople.

## VIRGINIE

The milliner and the dressmaker—

# THÉRÈSE

And the dry-goods merchants.

# MERCADET

That is all right!—I have succeeded in my scheme!—My daughter shall be Comtesse de la Brive! (To the servants) Show them in!—I am waiting, and the money is ready. (He goes proudly towards his study, while the servants look at him with surprise.)

Curtain to the First Act.

#### ACT II.

### SCENE FIRST.

(Mercadet's study, containing book-shelves, a safe, a desk, an armchair and a sofa.)

MINARD AND JUSTIN, THEN JULIE.

#### MINARD

Did you say that M. Mercadet wished to speak with me?

#### JUSTIN

Yes, sir. But mademoiselle has requested that you await her here.

# MINARD (aside)

Her father asks to see me.—She wishes to speak to me before the interview. Something extraordinary must have happened.

JUSTIN

Mademoiselle is here. (Enter Julie.)

MINARD (going towards her)

Mlle. Julie!—

## JULIE

Justin, inform my father that the gentleman has arrived. (*Exit Justin*.) If you wish, Adolphe, that our love should shine as bright in the sight of all as it does in our hearts, be as courageous as I have already been.

#### MINARD

What has taken place?

### JULIE

A rich young suitor has presented himself, and my father is acting without any pity for us.

#### MINARD

A rival!—And you ask me if I have any courage! Tell me his name, Julie, and you will soon know whether I have any courage.

#### JULIE

Adolphe! You make me shudder! Is this the way in which you are going to act with the hope of bending my father?

MINARD (seeing Mercadet approach)

Here he comes.

## SCENE SECOND.

THE SAME PERSONS AND MERCADET.

## MERCADET

Sir, are you in love with my daughter?

MINARD

Yes, sir.

# MERCADET

That is, at least, what she believes, and you seem to have had the talent to persuade her that it is so.

# MINARD

Your manner of expressing yourself implies a doubt on your part, which in any one else would have been offensive to me. Why should I not love mademoiselle? Abandoned by my parents, it was from your daughter, sir, that I have learned for the first time the happiness of affection. Mlle. Julie is at the same time a sister and a friend to me. She is my whole family. She alone has smiled upon me and has encouraged me; and my love for her is beyond what language can express!

JULIE

Must I remain here, father?

# MERCADET (to his daughter)

Swallow it all! (To Minard) Sir, with regard to the love of young people I have those positive ideas which are considered peculiar to old men. My distrust of such love is all the more permissible because I am not a father blinded by paternal affection. I see Julie exactly as she is; without being absolutely plain, she has none of that beauty that makes people cry out, "See!" She is quite mediocre.

## MINARD

You are mistaken, sir; I venture to say that you do not know your daughter.

MERCADET

Permit me-

MINARD

You do not know her, sir.

# MERCADET

But I know her perfectly well—as if—in a word, I know her—

MINARD

No, sir, you do not.

MERCADET

Do you mean to contradict me again, sir?

#### MINARD

You know the Julie that all the world sees; but love has transfigured her! Tenderness and devotion lend to her a transporting beauty that I alone have called up in her.

### JULIE

Father, I feel ashamed—

#### MERCADET

You mean you feel happy. And if you, sir, repeat these things—

### MINARD

I shall repeat them a hundred times, a thousand times, and even then I couldn't repeat them often enough. There is no crime in repeating them before a father!

### MERCADET

You flatter me! I did believe myself her father; but you are the father of a Julie whose acquaintance I should very much like to make.

## MINARD

You have never been in love, I suppose?

# MERCADET

I have been very much in love! And felt the galling chain of gold like everybody else.

# MINARD

That was long ago. In these days we love in a better way.

# MERCADET

How do you do that?

MINARD

We cling to the soul, to the ideal!

What we used to call under the Empire, having our eyes bandaged.

### MINARD

It is love, pure and holy, which can lend a charm to all the hours of life.

#### MERCADET

Yes, all!—except the dinner hour.

### JULIE

Father, do not ridicule two children who love each other with a passion which is true and pure, because it is founded upon a knowledge of each other's character; on the certitude of their mutual ardor in conquering the difficulties of life; in a word, of two children who will also cherish sincere affection for you.

# MINARD (to Mercadet)

What an angel, sir!

# MERCADET (aside)

I'll angel you! (Putting an arm around each.) Happy children!—You are absolutely in love? What a fine romance! (To Minard) You desire her for your wife?

MINARD

Yes, sir.

MERCADET

In spite of all obstacles?

MINARD

It is mine to overcome them!

JULIE

Father, ought you not to be grateful to me in that by my

choice I am giving you a son full of lofty sentiments, endowed with a courageous soul, and—

MINARD

Mademoiselle—Julie.

JULIE

Let me finish; I must have my say.

### MERCADET

My daughter, go and see your mother, and let me speak of matters which are a great deal more material than these.

JULIE

I will go, father—

MERCADET

Come back presently with your mother, my child. (He kisses her and leads her to the door.)

MINARD (aside)

I feel my hopes revive.

MERCADET (returning)

Sir, I am a ruined man.

MINARD

What does that mean?

# MERCADET

Totally ruined. And if you wish to have my Julie, you are welcome to her. She will be much better off at your house, poor as you are, than in her paternal home. Not only is she without dowry, but she is burdened with poor parents—parents who are more than poor.

## MINARD

More than poor! There is nothing beyond that.

Yes, sir, we are in debt, deeply in debt, and some of these debts clamor for payment.

MINARD

No, no, it is impossible!

### MERCADET

Don't you believe it? (Aside) He is getting frightened. (Taking up a pile of papers from his desk. Aloud) Here, my would-be son-in-law, are the family papers which will show you our fortune—

MINARD

Sir—

### MERCADET

Or rather our lack of fortune! Read—Here is a writ of attachment on our furniture.

MINARD

Can it be possible?

# MERCADET

It is perfectly possible! Here are judgments by the score! Here is a writ of arrest. You see in what straits we are! Here you see all my sales, the protests on my notes and the judgments classed in order—for, young man, understand well in a disordered condition of things, order is above all things necessary. When disorder is well arranged it can be relieved and controlled—What can a debtor say when he sees his debt entered up under his number? I make the government my model. All payments are made in alphabetic order. I have not yet touched the letter A. (He replaces the papers.)

MINARD

You haven't yet paid anything?

Scarcely anything. You know the condition of my expenses. You know, because you are a book-keeper.—See, (picking up the papers again) the total debit is three hundred and eighty thousand.

### MINARD

Yes, sir. The balance is entered there.

### MERCADET

You can understand then how you must make me shudder when you come before my daughter with your fine protestations! Since to marry a poor girl with nothing but an income of eighteen hundred francs, is like inviting in wedlock a protested note with a writ of execution.

# MINARD (lost in thought)

Ruined, ruined! And without resources!

# Mercadet (aside)

I thought that would upset him! (Aloud) Come, now, young man, what are you going to do?

## MINARD

First, I thank you, sir, for the frankness of your admissions.

# MERCADET

That is good! And what of the ideal, and your love for my daughter?

### MINARD

You have opened my eyes, sir.

# MERCADET (aside)

I am glad to hear it.

#### MINARD

I thought that I already loved her with a love that was boundless, and now I love her a hundred times more.

## MERCADET

The deuce you do!

#### MINARD

Have you not led me to understand that she will have need of all my courage, of all my devotion! I will render her happy by other means than by my tenderness; she shall feel grateful for all my efforts, she shall love me for my vigils, and for my toils.

#### MERCADET

You mean to tell me that you still wish to marry her?

#### MINARD

Do I wish! When I believed that you were rich, I would not ask her of you without trembling, without feeling ashamed of my poverty; but now, sir, it is with assurance and with tranquillity of mind that I ask for her.

# MERCADET (to himself)

I must admit that this is a love exceedingly true, sincere and noble! And such as I had believed it impossible to find in the whole world! (*To Minard*) Forgive me, young man, for the opinion I had of you—forgive me, above all. for the disappointment I am about to cause you—

MINARD

What do you mean?

### MERCADET

M. Minard—Julie—cannot be your wife

#### MINARD

What is this, sir? Not be my wife? In spite of our love, in spite of all you have confided to me?

### MERCADET

Yes, and just because of all I have confided to you. I have shown you Mercadet the rich man in his true colors. I am going to show you him as the skeptical man of business. I have frankly opened my books to you. I am now going to open my heart to you as frankly.

#### MINARD

Speak out, sir, but remember how great my devotion to Mlle. Julie is. Remember that my self-sacrifice and unselfishness are equal to my love for her.

### MERCADET

Let it be granted that by means of night-long vigils and toils you will make a living for Julie! But who will make a living for us, her father and mother?

### MINARD

Ah! sir-believe in me!

# MERCADET

What! Are you going to work for four, instead of working for only two? The task will be too much for you! And the bread which you give to us, you will have to snatch out of the hands of your children—

## MINARD

How wildly you talk!

## MERCADET

And I, in spite of your generous efforts, shall fall, crushed under the weight of disgraceful ruin. A brilliant marriage for

my daughter is the only means by which I would be enabled to discharge the enormous sums I owe. It is only thus that in time I could regain confidence and credit. With the aid of a rich son-in-law I can reconquer my position, and recuperate my fortune! Why, the marriage of my daughter is our last anchor of salvation!—This marriage is our hope, our wealth, the prop of our honor, sir! And since you love my daughter, it is to this very love that I make my appeal. My friend, do not condemn her to poverty; do not condemn her to a life of regret over the loss and disgrace which she has brought upon her father!

MINARD (in great distress)

But what do you ask me to do?

Mercadet (taking him by the hand)

I wish that this noble affection which you have for her, may arm you with more courage than I myself possess.

MINARD

I will show such courage—

# MERCADET

Then listen to me.—If I refuse Julie to you, Julie will refuse the man I destine for her. It will be best, therefore, that I grant your request for her hand, and that you be the one—

MINARD

I!—She will not believe it, sir—

# MERCADET

She will believe you, if you tell her that you fear poverty for her.

# MINARD

She will accuse me of being a fortune hunter.

She will be indebted to you for having secured her happiness.

MINARD (despairingly)

She will despise me, sir!

## MERCADET

That is probable! But if I have read your heart aright, your love for her is such that you will sacrifice yourself completely to the happiness of her life. But here she comes, sir, and her mother is with her. It is on their account that I make this request to you, sir; can I count on you?

MINARD

You-can.

MERCADET

Very good—I thank you.

# SCENE THIRD.

THE PRECEDING, JULIE AND MME. MERCADET.

LIE

Come, mother, I am sure that Adolphe has triumphed over all obstacles.

# MME. MERCADET

My dear, M. Minard has asked of you the hand of Julie. What answer have you given him?

MERCADET (going to the desk)

It is for him to say.

# MINARD (aside)

How can I tell her?—My heart is breaking!

JULIE

What have you got to say, Adolphe?

MINARD

Mademoiselle-

JULIE

Mademoiselle!—Am I no longer Julie to you? Oh, tell me quickly.—You have settled everything with my father, have you not?

#### MINARD

Your father has shown great confidence in me.—He has revealed to me his situation; he has told me—

JULIE

Go on, please go on-

MERCADET

I have told him that we are ruined—

JULIE

And this avowal has not changed your plans—your love—has it, Adolphe?

MINARD (ardently)

My love!—(Mercadet, without being noticed, seizes his hand.) I should be deceiving you—mademoiselle—(speaking with great effort)—if I were to say that my intentions are unaltered.

JULIE

Oh! It is impossible! Can it be you who speak to me in this strain?

MME. MERCADET

Julie-

# MINARD (rousing himself)

There are some men to whom poverty adds energy; men capable of daily self-sacrifice, of hourly toil; men who think themselves sufficiently recompensed by a smile from a companion that they love—(checking himself). I, mademoiselle, am not one of these.—The thought of poverty dismays me.—I—I could not endure the sight of your unhappiness.

Julie (bursting into tears and flinging herself into the arms of her mother)

Oh! mother! mother! mother!

MME. MERCADET

My daughter—my poor Julie!

MINARD (in a low voice to Mercadet)
Is this sufficient, sir?

Julie (without looking at Minard)

I should have had courage for both of us.—I should always have greeted you with a smile, I should have toiled without regret, and happiness would always have reigned in our home.—You could never have meant this, Adolphe.—You do not mean it!—

MINARD (in a low voice)

Let me go—let me leave the house, sir!

# MERCADET

Come, then. (He retires to the back of the stage.)

# MINARD

Good-bye—Julie.—A love that would have flung you into poverty is a thoughtless love. I have preferred to show the love that sacrifices itself to your happiness—

#### JULIE

No,—I trust you no longer. (In a low voice to her mother) My only happiness would have been to be his.

# Justin (announcing visitors)

M. de la Brive! M. de Mericourt!

## MERCADET

Take your daughter away, madame. M. Minard, follow me. (To Justin) Ask them to wait here for awhile. (To Minard) I am well satisfied with you. (Mme. Mercadet and Julie, Mercadet and Minard go out in opposite directions, while Justin admits Mericourt and De la Brive.)

### SCENE FOURTH.

## DE LA BRIVE AND MERICOURT.

### JUSTIN

M. Mercadet begs that the gentlemen will wait for him here. (Exit.)

# MERICOURT

At last, my dear friend, you are on the ground, and you will be very soon officially recognized as Mlle. Mercadet's intended! Steer your bark well, for the father is a deep one.

# DE LA BRIVE

That is what frightens me, for difficulties loom ahead.

## MERICOURT

I do not believe so; Mercadet is a speculator, rich to-day, to-morrow possibly a beggar. With the little I know of his

affairs from his wife, I am led to believe that he is enchanted with the prospect of depositing a part of his fortune in the name of his daughter, and of obtaining a son-in-law capable of assisting him in carrying out his financial schemes.

### DE LA BRIVE

That is a good idea, and suits me exactly; but suppose he wishes to find out too much about me?

## MERICOURT

I have given M. Mercadet an excellent account of you.

### DE LA BRIVE

I have fallen upon my feet truly.

### MERICOURT

But you are not going to lose the dandy's self-possession? I quite understand that your position is risky. A man would not marry, excepting from utter despair. Marriage is suicide for the man of the world. (In a low voice) Come, tell mecan you hold out much longer?

# DE LA BRIVE

If I had not two names, one for the bailiffs and one for the fashionable world, I should be banished from the Boulevard. Woman and I, as you know, have wrought each the ruin of the other, and, as fashion now goes, to find a rich Englishwoman, an amiable dowager, an amorous gold mine, would be as impossible as to find an extinct animal.

# MERICOURT

What of the gaming table?

# DE LA BRIVE

Oh! Gambling is an unreliable resource excepting for cer-

tain crooks, and I am not such a fool as to run the risk of disgrace for the sake of winnings which always have their limit. Publicity, my dear friend, has been the abolition of all those shady careers in which fortune once was to be found. So, that for a hundred thousand francs of accepted bills, the usurer gives me but ten thousand. Pierquin sent me to one of his agents, a sort of sub-Pierquin, a little old man called Violette, who said to my broker that he could not give me money on such paper at any rate! Meanwhile my tailor has refused to bank upon my prospects. My horse is living on credit; as to my tiger, the little wretch who wears such fine clothes, I do not know how he lives, or where he feeds. I dare not peer into the mystery. Now, as we are not so advanced in civilization as the Jews, who canceled all debts every half-century, a man must pay by the sacrifice of personal liberty. Horrible things will be said about me. Here is a young man of high esteem in the world of fashion, pretty lucky at cards, of a passable figure, less than twenty-eight years old, and he is going to marry the daughter of a rich speculator!

## MERICOURT

What difference does it make?

# DE LA BRIVE

It is slightly off color! But I am tired of a sham life. I have learned at last that the only way to amass wealth is to work. But our misfortune is that we find ourselves quick at everything, but not good at anything! A man like me, capable of inspiring a passion and of maintaining it, cannot become either a clerk or a soldier! Society has provided no employment for us. Accordingly, I am going to set up business with Mercadet. He is one of the greatest of schemers. You are sure that he won't give less than a hundred and fifty thousand francs to his daughter?

# MERICOURT

Judge yourself, my dear friend, from the style which Mme.

Mercadet puts on; you see her at all the first nights, in her own box, at the opera, and her conspicuous elegance—

#### DE LA BRIVE

I myself am elegant enough, but—

#### MERICOURT

Look round you here—everything indicates opulence—Oh! they are well off!

### DE LA BRIVE

Yet, it is a sort of middle-class splendor, something substantial which promises well.

### MERICOURT

And then the mother is a woman of principle, of irreproachable behavior. Can you possibly conclude matters to-day?

# DE LA BRIVE

I have taken steps to do so. I won at the club yesterday sufficient to go on with; I shall pay something on the wedding presents, and let the balance stand.

## MERICOURT

Without reckoning my account, what is the amount of your debts?

# DE LA BRIVE

A mere trifle! A hundred and fifty thousand francs, which my father-in-law will cut down to fifty thousand. I shall have a hundred thousand francs left to begin life on. I always said that I should never become rich until I hadn't a sou left.

# MERICOURT

Mercadet is an astute man; he will question you about your fortune; are you prepared?

#### DE LA BRIVE

Am I not the landed proprietor of La Brive?—Three thousand acres in the Landes, which are worth thirty thousand francs, mortgaged for forty-five thousand and capable of being floated by a stock jobbing company for some commercial purpose or other, say, as representing a capital of a hundred thousand crowns! You cannot imagine how much this property has brought me in.

### MERICOURT

Your name, your horse, and your lands seem to me to be on their last legs.

DE LA BRIVE

Not so loud!

MERICOURT

So you have quite made up your mind?

### DE LA BRIVE

Yes, and all the more decidedly in that I am going into politics.

MERICOURT

Really—but you are too clever for that!

DE LA BRIVE

As a preparation I shall take to journalism.

## MERICOURT

And you have never written two lines in your life!

# DE LA BRIVE

There are journalists who write and journalists who do not write. The former are editors—the horses that drag the cart; the latter, the proprietors, who furnish the funds; these give oats to their horses and keep the capital for themselves. I shall be a proprietor. You merely have to put on a lofty air

and exclaim: "The Eastern question is a question of great importance and of wide influence, one about which there cannot be two opinions!" You sum up a discussion by declaiming: "England, sir, will always get the better of us!" or you make an answer to some one whom you have heard speak for a long time without paying attention to him: "We are advancing towards an abyss, we have not yet passed through all the evolutions of the evolutionary phase!" You say to a representative of labor: "Sir, I think there is something to be done in this matter." A proprietor of a journal speaks very little, rushes about and makes himself useful by doing for a man in power what the latter cannot do himself. He is supposed to inspire the articles, those I mean, which attract any notice! And then, if it is absolutely necessary, he undertakes to publish a yellow-backed volume on some Utopian topic, so well written, so strong, that no one opens it, although every one declares that he has read it! Then he is looked upon as an earnest man, and ends by finding himself acknowledged as somebody, instead of something.

### MERICOURT

Alas! What you say is too true, in these times!

## DE LA BRIVE

And we ourselves are a startling proof of this! In order to claim a part in political power you must not show what good, but what harm you can do. You must not alone possess talents, you must be able also to inspire fear. Accordingly, the very day after my marriage, I shall assume an air of seriousness, of profundity, of high principles! I can take my choice, for we have in France a list of principles which is as varied as a bill of fare. I elect to be a socialist! The word pleases me! At every epoch, my dear friend, there are adjectives which form the pass-words of ambition! Before 1789 a man called himself an economist; in 1815 he was a liberal; the next party will call itself the social party—per-

haps because it is so unsocial. For in France you must always take the opposite sense of a word to understand its meaning.

## MERICOURT

Let me tell you privately, that you are now talking nothing but the nonsense of masked ball chatter, which passes for wit among those who do not indulge in it. What are you going to do when a certain definite knowledge becomes necessary?

## DE LA BRIVE

My dear friend! In every profession, whether of art, science or literature, a man needs intellectual capital, special knowledge and capacity. But in politics, my dear fellow, a man wins everything and attains to everything by means of a single phrase—

#### MERICOURT

What is that?

### DE LA BRIVE

"The principles of my friends; the party for which I stand, look for—"

### MERICOURT

Hush! Here comes the father-in-law!

# SCENE FIFTH.

THE SAME PERSONS AND MERCADET.

# MERCADET

Good-day, my dear Mericourt! (To De la Brive) The ladies have kept you waiting, sir. Ah! They are putting on their finery. For myself, I was just on the point of dismissing—whom do you think?—an aspirant to the hand of Mlle. Julie. Poor young man!—I was perhaps hard on him, and

yet I felt for him. He worships my daughter; but what could I do? He has only ten thousand francs' income

DE LA BRIVE

That wouldn't go very far!

MERCADET

A mere subsistence!

DE LA BRIVE

You're not the man to give a rich and clever girl to the first comer—

MERICOURT

Certainly not.

MERCADET

Before the ladies come in, gentlemen, we must talk a little serious business.

DE LA BRIVE (to Mericourt)

Now comes the tug of war! (They all sit down.)

MERCADET (on the sofa)

Are you seriously in love with my daughter?

DE LA BRIVE

I love her passionately!

MERCADET

Passionately?—

MERICOURT (to his friend)

You are over-doing it.

DE LA BRIVE (to Mericourt)

Wait a moment. (Aloud) Sir, I am ambitious—and I

saw in Mlle. Julie a lady at once distinguished, full of intellect, possessed of charming manners, who would never be out of place in the position in which my fortune puts me; and such a wife is essential to the success of a politician.

#### MERCADET

I understand! It is easy to find a woman, but it is very rare that a man who wishes to be a minister or ambassador finds a wife. You are a man of wit, sir. May I ask your political leaning?

#### DE LA BRIVE

Sir, I am a socialist.

#### MERCADET

That is a new move! But now let us talk of money matters.

#### MERICOURT

It seems to me that the notary might attend to that.

## DE LA BRIVE

No! M. Mercadet is right; it is best that we should attend to these things ourselves.

### MERCADET

True, sir.

# DE LA BRIVE

Sir, my whole fortune consists in the estate which bears my name; it has been in my family for a hundred and fifty years, and I hope will never pass from us.

# MERCADET

The possession of capital is perhaps more valuable in these days. Capital is in your own hand. If a revolution breaks out, and we have had many revolutions lately, capital follows us everywhere. Landed property, on the contrary, must fur-

nish funds for every one. There it stands stock still like a fool to pay the taxes, while capital dodges out of the way. But this is no real obstacle. What is the amount of your land?

### DE LA BRIVE

Three thousand acres, without a break.

MERCADET

Without a break?

MERICOURT

Did not I tell you as much?

MERCADET

I never doubted it.

DE LA BRIVE

A château—

MERCADET

Good-

## DE LA BRIVE

And salt marshes, which can be worked as soon as the administration gives permission. They would yield enormous returns!

## MERCADET

Ah, sir, why have we been so late in becoming acquainted! Your land, then, must be on the seashore.

DE LA BRIVE

Within half a league of it.

MERCADET

And it is situated?

DE LA BRIVE

Near Bordeaux.

You have vineyards, then?

#### DE LA BRIVE

No! fortunately not, for the disposal of wines is a trouble-some matter, and, moreover, the cultivation of the vine is exceedingly expensive. My estate was planted with pine trees by my grandfather, a man of genius, who was wise enough to sacrifice himself to the welfare of his descendants. Besides, I have furniture, which you know—

#### MERCADET

Sir, one moment, a man of business is always careful to dot his i's.

DE LA BRIVE (under his voice)

Now we're in for it!

#### MERCADET

With regard to your estate and your marshes,—I see all that can be got out of these marshes. The best way of utilizing them would be to form a company for the exploitation of the marshes of the Brive! There is more than a million in it!

# DE LA BRIVE

I quite understand that, sir. They need only to be thrown upon the market.

# MERCADET (aside)

These words indicate a certain intelligence in this young man. (Aloud) Have you any debts? Is your estate mortgaged?

# MERICOURT

You would not think much of my friend if he had no debts.

## DE LA BRIVE

I will be frank, sir, there is a mortgage of forty-five thousand francs on my estate.

# MERCADET (aside)

An innocent young man! he might easily— (Rising from his seat. Aloud) You have my consent; you shall be my son-in-law, and are the very man I would choose for my daughter's husband. You do not realize what a fortune you possess.

# DE LA BRIVE (to Mericourt)

This is almost too good to be true.

# MERICOURT (to De la Brive)

He is dazzled by the good speculation which he sees ahead.

# MERCADET (aside)

With government protection, which can be purchased, salt pits may be established. I am saved! (Aloud) Allow me to shake hands with you, after the English fashion. You fulfill all that I expected in a son-in-law. I plainly see you have none of the narrowness of provincial land-holders; we shall understand each other thoroughly.

# DE LA BRIVE

You must not take it in bad part, sir, if I, on my part, ask you—

# MERCADET

The amount of my daughter's fortune? I should have distrusted you if you hadn't asked! My daughter has independent means; her mother settles on her her own fortune, consisting of a small property—a farm of two hundred acres, but in the very heart of Brie, and provided with good buildings. Besides this, I shall give her two hundred thousand francs, the interest of which will be for your use, until you

find a suitable investment for it. So you see, young man, we do not wish to deceive you, we wish to keep the money moving; I like you, you please me, for I see you have ambition.

DE LA BRIVE

Yes, sir.

MERCADET

You love luxury, extravagance; you wish to shine at Paris—

DE LA BRIVE

Yes, sir.

MERCADET

You see that I am already an old man, obliged to lay the load of my ambition upon some congenial co-operator, and you shall be the one to play the brilliant part.

### DE LA BRIVE

Sir, had I been obliged to take my choice of all the fathers-in-law in Paris, I should have given the preference to you. You are a man after my own heart! Allow me to shake hands, after the English fashion! (They shake hands for the second time.)

MERCADET (aside)

It seems too good to be true.

DE LA BRIVE (aside)

He fell head-first into my salt marshes!

MERCADET (aside)

He accepts an income from me! (He retires towards the door on the left side.)

MERICOURT (to De la Brive)

Are you satisfied?

# DE LA BRIVE (to Mericourt)

I don't see the money for my debts.

# MERICOURT (to De la Brive)

Wait a moment. (To Mercadet) My friend does not dare to tell you of it, but he is too honest for concealment. He has a few debts.

### MERCADET

Oh, please tell me. I understand perfectly—I suppose it is about fifty thousand you owe?

MERICOURT

Very nearly—

DE LA BRIVE

Very nearly—

MERCADET

A mere trifle.

DE LA BRIVE (laughing)

Yes, a mere trifle!

# MERCADET

They will serve as a subject of discussion between your wife and you; yes, let her have the pleasure of—But, we will pay them all. (Aside) In shares of the La Brive salt pits. (Aloud) It is so small an amount. (Aside) We will put up the capital of the salt marsh a hundred thousand francs more. (Aloud) That matter is settled, son-in-law.

# DE LA BRIVE

We will consider it settled, father-in-law.

MERCADET (aside)

I am saved!

DE LA BRIVE (aside)

I am saved!

### SCENE SIXTH.

THE SAME PERSONS, MME. MERCADET AND JULIE.

MERCADET

Here are my wife and daughter.

MERICOURT

Madame, allow me to present to you my friend, M de la Brive, who regards your daughter with—

DE LA BRIVE

With passionate admiration.

MERCADET

My daughter is exactly the woman to suit a politician.

De la Brive (to Mericourt. Gazing at Julie through his eyeglass)

A fine girl. (To Madame Mercadet) Like mother, like daughter. Madame, I place my hopes under your protection.

MME. MERCADET

Anyone introduced by M. Mericourt would be welcome here.

Julie (to her father)

What a coxcomb!

MERCADET (to his daughter)

He is enormously rich.—We shall all be millionaires!—He is an excessively clever fellow. Now, do try and be amiable, as you ought to be.

Julie (answering him)

What would you wish me to say to a dandy whom I have

just seen for the first time, and whom you destine for my husband?—

### DE LA BRIVE

May I be permitted to hope, mademoiselle, that you will look favorably upon me?

JULIE

My duty is to obey my father.

## DE LA BRIVE

Young people are not always aware of the feelings which they inspire. For two months I have been longing for the happiness of paying my respects to you.

### JULIE

Who can be more flattered than I am, sir, to find that I have attracted your attention?

# MME. MERCADET (to Mericourt)

He is a fine fellow. (Aloud) We hope that you and your friend M. de la Brive will do us the pleasure of accepting our invitation to dine without ceremony.

# MERCADET

To take pot-luck with us. (To De la Brive) You must excuse our simplicity.

Justin (entering, in a low voice to Mercadet)

M. Pierquin wishes to speak to you, monsieur.

MERCADET (low)

Pierquin?

### JUSTIN

He says it is concerning an important and urgent matter.

What can he want with me? Let him come in. (Justin goes out. Aloud) My dear, these gentlemen must be tired. Won't you take them into the drawing-room? M. de la Brive, give my daughter your arm.

#### DE LA BRIVE

Mademoiselle—(offers her his arm.)

# Julie (aside)

He is handsome, he is rich—why does he choose me?

#### MME. MERCADET

M. de Mericourt, will you come and see the picture which we are going to raffle off for the benefit of the poor orphans?

#### MERICOURT

With pleasure, madame.

## MERCADET

Go on. I shall be with you in a moment.

# SCENE SEVENTH.

MERCADET AND PIERQUIN.

# MERCADET (alone)

Well, after all, this time I have really secured fortune and the happiness of Julie and the rest of us. For a son-in-law like this is a veritable gold mine! Three thousand acres! A château! Salt marshes! (He sits down at his desk.)

PIERQUIN (entering)

Good-day, Mercadet. I have come—

Rather inopportunely. But what do you wish?

# PIERQUIN

I sha'n't detain you long. The bills of exchange I gave you this morning, signed by a man called Michonnin, are absolutely valueless. I told you this beforehand.

MERCADET

I know that.

PIERQUIN

I now offer you a thousand crowns for them.

### MERCADET

That is either too much or too little! Anything for which you will give that sum must be worth infinitely more. Some one is waiting for me in the other room. I will bid you good-evening.

PIERQUIN

I will give you four thousand francs.

MERCADET

No!

PIERQUIN

Five—six thousand.

MERCADET.

If you wish to play cards, keep to the gambling table. Why do you wish to recover this paper?

PIERQUIN

Michonnin has insulted me. I wish to take vengeance on him; to send him to jail.

MERCADET (rising)

Six thousand francs worth of vengeance! You are not a man to indulge in luxuries of that kind.

PIERQUIN

I assure you—

### MERCADET.

Come now, my friend, consider that for a satisfactory defamation of character the code won't charge you more than five or six hundred francs, and the tax on a blow is only fifty francs—

PIERQUIN

I swear to you—

MERCADET.

Has this Michonnin come into a legacy? And are the forty-seven thousand francs of these vouchers actually worth forty-seven thousand francs? You should post me on this subject and then we'll cry halves!

PIERQUIN

Very well, I agree. The fact of it is, Michonnin is to be married.

MERCADET

What next! And with whom, pray?

PIERQUIN

With the daughter of some nabob—an idiot who is giving her an enormous dowry!

MERCADET

Where does Michonnin live?

PIERQUIN

Do you want to issue a writ? He is without a fixed abode in Paris. His furniture is held under the name of a friend; but his legal domicile must be in the neighborhood of Bordeaux, in the village of Ermont.

Stay a while. I have some one here from that region. I can get exact information in a moment—and then we can begin proceedings.

# PIERQUIN

Send me the paper, and leave the business to me-

### MERCADET

I shall be very glad to do so. They shall be put into your hands in return for a signed agreement as to the sharing of the money. I am at present altogether taken up with the marriage of my daughter.

# PIERQUIN

I hope everything is going on well.

#### MERCADET

Wonderfully well. My son-in-law is a gentleman and, in spite of that, he is rich. And, although both rich and a gentleman, he is clever into the bargain.

# PIERQUIN

I congratulate you.

# MERCADET.

One word with you before you go. You said, Michonnin, of Ermont, in the neighborhood of Bordeaux?—

# Pierquin

Yes, he has an old aunt somewhere about there! A good woman called Bourdillac, who scrapes along on some six hundred francs a year, but to whom he gives the title of Marchioness of Bourdillac. He pretends that her health is delicate and that she has a yearly income of forty thousand francs.

Thank you. Good-evening-

PIERQUIN

Good-evening (goes out).

MERCADET (ringing)

Justin!

JUSTIN

Did you call, sir?

MERCADET.

Ask M. de la Brive to speak with me for a moment. (Justin goes out.)

MERCADET.

Here is a windfall of twenty-three thousand francs! We shall be able to arrange things famously for Julie's marriage.

## SCENE EIGHTH.

MERCADET, DE LA BRIVE AND JUSTIN.

De la Brive (to Justin, handing him a letter)
Here, deliver this letter.—And this is for yourself.

Justin (aside)

A louis! Mademoiselle will be sure to have a happy home. (Exit.)

DE LA BRIVE

You wish to speak with me, my dear father-in-law?

MERCADET

Yes. You see I already treat you without ceremony. Please to take a seat.

DE LA BRIVE (sitting on a sofa)

I am grateful for your confidence.

### MERCADET

I am seeking information with regard to a debtor, who, like you, lives in the neighborhood or Bordeaux.

DE LA BRIVE

I know every one in that district.

### MERCADET

I am seeking information with regard to a debtor, who, like you, lives in the neighborhood of Bordeaux.

DE LA BRIVE

Relations! I have none but an old aunt.

MERCADET (pricking up his ears)

An-old aunt-?

DE LA BRIVE

Whose health-

MERCADET (trembling)

Is—is—delicate?

DE LA BRIVE

And her income is forty thousand francs—

MERCADET (quite overcome)

Good Lord! the very figure!

DE LA BRIVE

The Marchioness, you see, will be a good woman to have on hand. I mean the Marchioness—

MERCADET (vehemently rushing at him)
Of Bourdillac, sir!

DE LA BRIVE

How is this? Do you know her name?

MERCADET

Yes, and yours too!

DE LA BRIVE

The devil you do!

MERCADET

You are head over ears in debt; your furniture is held in another man's name; your old aunt has a pittance of six hundred francs; Pierquin, who is one of your smallest creditors, has forty-seven thousand francs in notes of hand from you. You are Michonnin, and I am the idiotic nabob!

DE LA BRIVE (stretching himself at full length on the sofa)
By heavens! You know just as much about it as I do!

#### MERCADET

Well—I see that once more the devil has taken a hand in my game.

DE LA BRIVE (aside, rising to his feet)

The marriage is over! I am no longer a socialist; I shall become a communist.

MERCADET

And I have been just as easily deceived, as if I had been on the Exchange.

DE LA BRIVE

Show yourself worthy of your reputation.

MERCADET

M. Michonnin, your conduct is more than blameworthy!

DE LA BRIVE

In what particular? Did I not say that I had debts?

We'll let that pass, for any one may have debts; but where is your estate situated?

DE LA BRIVE

In the Landes.

MERCADET

And of what does it consist?

DE LA BRIVE

Of sand wastes, planted with firs.

MERCADET

Good to make toothpicks.

DE LA BRIVE

That's about it.

MERCADET

And it is worth.

DE LA BRIVE

Thirty thousand francs.

MERCADET

And mortgaged for-

DE LA BRIVE

Forty-five thousand!

MERCADET

And you had the skill to effect that?

DE LA BRIVE

Why, yes-

MERCADET

Damnation! But that was pretty clever! And your marshes, sir?

#### DE LA BRIVE

They border on the sea-

### MERCADET

They are part of the ocean!—

### DE LA BRIVE

The people of that country are evil-minded enough to say so. That is what hinders my loans!

### MERCADET

It would be very difficult to issue ocean shares!—Sir—I may tell you, between ourselves, that your morality seems to me—

## DE LA BRIVE

Somewhat-

#### MERCADET

Risky.

# DE LA BRIVE (in anger)

Sir!—(calming himself). Let this be merely between ourselves!

# MERCADET

You give a friend a bill of sale of your furniture, you sign your notes of hand with the name of Michonnin, and you call yourself merely De la Brive—

# DE LA BRIVE

Well, sir, what are you going to do about it?

# MERCADET

Do about it? I am going to lead you a pretty dance—

# DE LA BRIVE

Sir, I am your guest! Moreover, I may deny everything—What proofs have you?

What proofs! I have in my hands forty-seven thousand francs' worth of your notes.

DE LA BRIVE

Are they signed to the order of Pierquin?

MERCADET

Precisely so.

DE LA BRIVE

And you have had them since this morning?

MERCADET

Since this morning.

DE LA BRIVE

I see. You have given worthless stock in exchange for valueless notes.

MERCADET

Sir!

DE LA BRIVE

And, in order to seal the bargain, Pierquin, one of the least important of your creditors, has given you a delay of three months.

MERCADET

Who told you that?

DE LA BRIVE

Who? Who? Pierquin himself, of course, as soon as he learned I was going to make an arrangement—

MERCADET

The devil he did!

DE LA BRIVE

Ah! You were going to give two hundred thousand francs

as a dowry to your daughter, and you had debts to the amount of three hundred and fifty thousand! Between ourselves it looks like you who had been trying to swindle the son-in-law, sir—

# Mercadet (angrily)

Sir!—(calming himself). This is merely between ourselves, sir.

## DE LA BRIVE

You took advantage of my inexperience!

### MERCADET

Of course I did! The inexperience of a man who raises a loan on his sand wastes fifty per cent above their value.

### DE LA BRIVE

Glass can be made out of sand!

MERCADET

That's a good idea!

DE LA BRIVE

Therefore, sir-

# MERCADET

Silence! Promise me that this broken marriage-contract shall be kept secret.

# DE LA BRIVE

I swear it shall— Ah! excepting to Pierquin. I have just written to him to set his mind at rest.

# MERCADET

Is that the letter you sent by Justin?

DE LA BRIVE

The very one.

And what have you told him?

### DE LA BRIVE

The name of my father-in-law. Confound it!—I thought you were rich.

# Mercadet (despairingly)

And you have written that to Pierquin? It's all up! This fresh defeat will be known on the Exchange! But, any way, I am ruined! Suppose I write to him—Suppose I ask him—(He goes to the table to write.)

## SCENE NINTH.

THE SAME PERSONS, MME. MERCADET, JULIE AND VERDELIN.

MME. MERCADET

My friend, M. Verdelin.

Julie (to Verdelin)

Here is my father, sir.

# MERCADET

Ah! It is you, is it Verdelin—and you are come to dinner?

VERDELIN

No, I am not come to dinner.

Mercadet (aside)

He knows all. He is furious!

VERDELIN

And this gentleman is your son-in-law?—(Verdelin bows

to De la Brive.) This is a fine marriage you are going to make!

### MERCADET

The marriage, my dear sir, is not going to take place.

#### JULIE

How happy I feel! (De la Brive bows to her. She casts down her eyes.)

MME. MERCADET (seizing her hand)

My dear daughter!

### MERCADET

I have been deceived by Mericourt.

#### VERDELIN

And you have played on me one of your tricks this morning, for the purpose of getting a thousand crowns; but the whole incident has been made public on the Exchange, and they think it a huge joke!

### MERCADET

They have been informed, I suppose-

# VERDELIN

That your pocket-book is full of the notes of hand signed by your son-in-law. And Pierquin tells me that your creditors are exasperated, and are to meet to-night at the house of Goulard to conclude measures for united action against you to-morrow!

# MERCADET

To-night! To-morrow! Ah! I hear the knell of bank-ruptcy sound!

### VERDELIN

Yes, to-morrow they are going to send a prison cab for you.

MME MERCADET AND JULIE.

God help us!

### MERCADET

I see the carriage, the hearse of the speculator, carrying me to Clichy!

# VERDELIN

They wish, as far as possible, to rid the Exchange of all sharpers!

### MERCADET

They are fools, for in that case they will turn it into a desert! And so I am ruined! Expelled from the Exchange with all the sequelæ of bankruptcy,—shame, beggary! I cannot believe it,—it is impossible!

## DE LA BRIVE

Believe me, sir, that I regret having been in some degree—

# Mercadet (looking him in the face)

You! (In a low voice to him) Listen to me: you have hurried on my destruction, but you have it in your power to help me to escape.

# DE LA BRIVE

On what conditions?

# MERCADET

I will make you a good offer! (Aloud, as they start toward opposite doors) True, the idea is a bold one!—But to-morrow, the 'Change will recognize in me one of its master spirits.

## VERDELIN

What is he talking about?

To-morrow, all my debts will be paid, and the house of Mercadet will be turning over millions—I shall be acknowledged as the Napoleon of finance.

VERDELIN

What a man he is!

MERCADET

And a Napoleon who meets no Waterloo!

VERDELIN

But where are your troops?

#### MERCADET

My army is cash in hand! What answer can be made to a business man who says, "Take your money!" Come let us dine now.

#### VERDELIN

Certainly. I shall be delighted to dine with you.

MERCADET (while they all move towards the dining-room, aside)

They are all glad of it! To-morrow I will either command millions, or rest in the damp winding-sheet of the Seine!

Curtain to the Second Act.

### ACT III.

#### SCENE FIRST.

(Another apartment in Mercadet's house, well furnished. At the back and in the centre is a mantel-piece, having instead of a mirror a clear plate of glass; side doors; a large table, surrounded by chairs, in the middle of the stage; sofa and armchairs.)

JUSTIN, THÉRÈSE AND VIRGINIE, THEN MERCADET.

(Justin enters first and beckons to Thérèse. Virginie, carrying papers, sits insolently on the sofa. Justin looks through the keyhole of the door on the left side and listens.)

## THÉRÈSE

Is it possible that they could pretend to conceal from us the condition of their affairs?

## VIRGINIE

Old Gruneau tells me that the master is soon to be arrested; I hope that what I have spent will be taken account of, for he owes me the money for these bills, besides my wages!

# THÉRÈSE

Oh! set your mind at rest. We are likely to lose everything, for the master is bankrupt.

# JUSTIN

I can't hear anything. They speak too low! They don't trust us.

#### VIRGINIE

It is frightful!

Justin (with his ear to the half-open door)

Wait, I think I hear something. (The door bursts open and Mercadet appears.)

MERCADET (to Justin)

Don't let me disturb you.

JUSTIN

Sir. I—I—was just putting—

#### MERCADET

Really! (To Virginie, who jumps up suddenly from the sofa) Keep your seat, Mlle. Virginie, and you, M. Justin. Why didn't you come in? We were talking about my business

JUSTIN

You amuse me, sir.

MERCADET

I am heartily glad of it.

JUSTIN

You take trouble easy, sir.

# MERCADET (severely)

That will do, all of you. And remember that from this time forth I see all who call. Treat no one either with insolence or too much humility, for you will meet here no creditors, but such as have been paid.

JUSTIN

Oh, bosh!

Go!—(The central door opens. Mme. Mercadet, Julie and Minard appear. The servants leave the room.)

## SCENE SECOND.

MERCADET, MME. MERCADET, JULIE AND MINARD.

# MERCADET (aside)

I am annoyed to see my wife and daughter here. In my present circumstances, women are likely to spoil everything, for they have nerves. (Aloud) What is it, Mme. Mercadet?

### MME. MERCADET

Sir, you were counting on the marriage of Julie to establish your credit and reassure your creditors, but the event of yesterday has put you at their mercy—

# MERCADET

Do you think so? Well, you are quite mistaken. I beg your pardon, M. Minard, but what brings you here?

MINARD

Sir—I—

JULIE

Father—it is—

MERCADET

Are you come to ask again for my daughter?

MINARD

Yes, sir.

MERCADET

But everybody says that I am going to fail-

MINARD

I know it, sir.

MERCADET

And would you marry the daughter of a bankrupt?

MINARD

Yes, for I would work to re-establish him.

JULIE

That's good, Adolphe.

MERCADET (aside)

A fine young fellow. I will give him an interest in the first big business I do.

MINARD

I have made known my attachment to the man I look upon as a father. He has informed me—that I am the possessor of a small fortune—

MERCADET

A fortune!

MINARD

When I was confided to his care, a sum of money was entrusted to him, which has increased by interest, and I now possess thirty thousand francs.

MERCADET

Thirty thousand francs!

MINARD

On learning of the disaster that had befallen you, I realized this sum, and I bring it to you, sir; for sometimes in these cases an arrangement can be made by paying something on account—

MME. MERCADET

He has an excellent heart!

Julie (with pride)

Yes, indeed, papa!-

MERCADET

Thirty thousand francs. (Aside) They might be tripled by buying some of Verdelin's stock and then doubled with—No, no. (To Minard) My boy, you are at the age of self-sacrifice. If I could pay two hundred thousand francs with thirty thousand, the fortune of France, of myself and of most people would be made.—No, keep your money!

MINARD

What! You refuse it?

MERCADET (aside)

If with this I could keep them quiet for a month, if by some bold stroke I could revive the depression in my property, it might be all right.—But the money of these poor children, it cut me to the heart to think of it, for when they are in tears people calculate amiss; it is not well to risk the money of any but fellow-brokers—no—no—(Aloud) Adolphe, you may marry my daughter!

MINARD

Oh! sir!-Julie-my own Julie-

MERCADET

That is, of course, as soon as she has three hundred thousand francs as dowry.

MME. MERCADET

My dear!

JULIE

Papa!

#### MINARD

Ah, sir!—How long are you going to put me off?

#### MERCADET

Put you off?—She will have it in a month! Perhaps sooner—

ALL

How is that?

### MERCADET

Yes, by the use of my brains—and a little money. (*Minard holds out his pocketbook*.) But lock up those bills! And come take away my wife and daughter. I want to be alone.

# MME. MERCADET (aside)

Is he going to hatch some plot against his creditors? I must find out.—Come, Julie.

JULIE

Papa, how good you are!

MERCADET

Nonsense!

JULIE

I love you so much.

MERCADET

Nonsense!

JULIE

Adolphe, I do not thank you, I shall have all my life for that.

MINARD

Dearest Julie!

Mercadet (leading them out)

Come, now, you had better breathe out your idyls in some more retired spot. (They go out.)

## SCENE THIRD.

# MERCADET, THEN DE LA BRIVE.

### MERCADET

I have resisted—it was a good impulse! But I was wrong to obey it. If I finally yield to the temptation, I can make their little capital worth very much more. I shall manage this fortune for them. My poor daughter has indeed a good lover. What hearts of gold are theirs! Dear children! (Goes towards the door at the right.) I must make their fortune. De la Brive is here awaiting me. (Looking through the open door) I believe he is asleep. I gave him a little too much wine, so as to handle him more easily. (Shouting) Michonnin! The constable! The constable!

DE LA BRIVE (coming out, rubbing his eyes)
Hello! What are you saying?

## MERCADET

Don't be frightened, I only wanted to wake you up. (Takes his seat at the table.)

DE LA BRIVE (sitting at the other side of the table)

Sir, an orgie acts on the mind like a storm on the country. It brings refreshment, it clothes with verdure! And ideas spring forth and bloom! In vino varietas!

# MERCADET

Yesterday, our conversation on business matters was interrupted.

# DE LA BRIVE

Father-in-law, I recall it distinctly—we recognized the fact that our houses could not keep their engagements. We were on the point of bankruptcy, and you are unfortunate enough to be my creditor, while I am fortunate enough to be your debtor to the amount of forty-seven thousand, two hundred and thirty-three francs and some centimes.

### MERCADET

Your head is level enough.

### DE LA BRIVE

But my pocket and my conscience are a little out. Yet who can reproach me? By squandering my fortune I have brought profit to every trade in Paris, and even to those who do not know me. We, the useless ones! We, the idlers!—Upon my soul! It is we who keep up the circulation of money—

### MERCADET

By means of the money in circulation—Ah! you have all your wits about you!

#### DE LA BRIVE

But I have nothing else.

# MERCADET

Our wits are our mint. Is it not so?—But, considering your present situation, I shall be brief.

# DE LA BRIVE

That is why I take a seat.

# MERCADET

Listen to me. I see that you are going down the steep way which leads to that daring cleverness for which fools blame successful operators. You have tested the piquant intoxicating fruits of Parisian pleasure. You have made luxury the inseparable companion of your life. Paris begins at the Place de l'Étoile, and ends at the Jockey Club. That

is your Paris, which is the world of women who are talked about too much, or not at all.

DE LA BRIVE

That is true.

#### MERCADET

You breathe the cynical atmosphere of wits and journalists, the atmosphere of the theatre and of the ministry. It is a vast sea in which thousands are casting their nets! You must either continue this existence, or blow your brains out!

#### DE LA BRIVE

No! For it is impossible to think that it can continue without me.

#### MERCADET

Do you feel that you have the genius to maintain yourself in style at the height to which you aspire?—To dominate men of mind by the power of capital and superiority of intellect? Do you think that you will always have skill enough to keep afloat between the two capes, which have seen the life of elegance so often founder between the cheap restaurant and the debtors' prison?

# DE LA BRIVE

Why! You are breaking into my conscience like a burglar—you echo my very thought! What do you want with me?

# MERCADET

I wish to rescue you, by launching you into the world of business.

DE LA BRIVE

By what entrance?

MERCADET

Let me choose the door.

DE LA BRIVE

The devil!

MERCADET

Show yourself a man who will compromise himself for me—

DE LA BRIVE

But men of straw may be burnt.

MERCADET

You must be incombustible.

DE LA BRIVE

What are the terms of our copartnership?

MERCADET

You try to serve me in the desperate circumstances in which I am at present, and I will make you a present of your forty-seven thousand, two hundred and thirty-three francs, to say nothing of the centimes. Between ourselves, I may say that only address is needed.

DE LA BRIVE

In the use of the pistol or the sword?

MERCADET

No one is to be killed; on the contrary—

DE LA BRIVE

That will suit me.

MERCADET

A man is to be brought to life again.

DE LA BRIVE

That doesn't suit me at all, my dear fellow. The legacy,

the chest of Harpagon, the little mule of Scapin and, indeed, all the farces which have made us laugh on the ancient stage are not well received nowadays in real life. The police have a way of getting mixed up with them, and since the abolition of privileges, no one can administer a drubbing with impunity.

## MERCADET

Well, what do you think of five years in debtors' prison? Eh? What a fate!—

## DE LA BRIVE

As a matter of fact, my decision must depend upon what you want me to do to any one, for my honor so far is intact and is worth—

## MERCADET

You must invest it well, for we shall have dire need of all that it is worth. I want you to assist me in sitting at the table which the Exchange always keeps spread, and we will gorge ourselves with the good things there offered us, for you must admit that while those who seek for millions have great difficulty in finding them, they are never found by those who do not seek.

# DE LA BRIVE

I think I can co-operate with you in this matter. You will return to me my forty-seven thousand francs—

# MERCADET

Yes, sir.

# DE LA BRIVE

I am not required to be anything but be—very clever?

# MERCADET

Nimble, but this nimbleness will be exercised, as the English say, on the right side of the law.

#### DE LA BRIVE

What is it you propose?

# MERCADET (giving him a paper)

Here are your written instructions. You are to represent something like an uncle from America—in fact, my partner, who has just come back from the West Indies.

## DE LA BRIVE

I understand.

## MERCADET

Go to the Champs-Elysées, secure a post-chaise that has been much battered, have horses harnessed to it, and make your arrival here wrapped in a great pelisse, your head enveloped in a huge cap, while you shiver like a man who finds our summer icy cold. I will receive you; I will conduct you in; you will speak to my creditors; not one of them knows Godeau; you will make them give me more time.

## DE LA BRIVE

How much time?

# MERCADET

I need only two days—two days, in order that Pierquin may complete certain purchases which we have ordered. Two days in order that the stock which I know how to inflate may have time to rise. You will be my backer, my security. And as no one will recognize you—

# DE LA BRIVE

I shall cease to be this personage as soon as I have paid you forty-seven thousand, two hundred and thirty-three francs and some centimes.

## MERCADET

That is so. But I hear some one—my wife—

# MME. MERCADET (enters)

My dear, there are some letters for you, and the bearer requires an answer. (She withdraws to the fireplace.)

## MERCADET

I suppose I must go. Good-day, my dear De la Brive. (In a low voice) Not a word to my wife; she would not understand the operation, and would misconstrue it. (Aloud) Go quickly, and forget nothing.

## DE LA BRIVE

You need have no fear. (Mercadet goes out by the left; De la Brive starts to go out by the centre, but Mme. Mercadet intercepts him.)

# SCENE FOURTH.

MME. MERCADET AND DE LA BRIVE.

DE LA BRIVE

Madame?

MME. MERCADET

Forgive me, sir!

DE LA BRIVE

Kindly excuse me, madame, I must be going-

MME. MERCADET

You must not go.

DE LA BRIVE

But you are not aware-

MME. MERCADET

I know all.

## DE LA BRIVE

How is that?

## MME. MERCADET

You and my husband are bent upon resorting to some very ancient expedients proper to the comic drama, and I have employed one which is more ancient still. And as I told you, I know all—

# DE LA BRIVE (aside)

She must have been listening.

## MME. MERCADET

Sir, the part which you have been induced to undertake is blameworthy and shameful, and you must give it up—

#### DE LA BRIVE

But after all, madame—

## MME. MERCADET

Oh! I know to whom I am speaking, sir; it was only a few hours ago that I saw you for the first time, and yet—I think I know you.

# DE LA BRIVE

Really? I am sure I do not know what opinion you have of me.

# MME. MERCADET

One day has given me time to form a correct judgment of you—and at the very time that my husband was trying to discover some foible in you he might make use of, or what evil passions he might rouse in you, I looked in your heart and discerned that it still contained good feelings which eventually may prove your salvation.

## DE LA BRIVE

Prove my salvation? Excuse me, madame.

## MME. MERCADET

Yes, sir, prove your salvation and that of my husband; for both of you are on the way to ruin. For you must understand that debts are no disgrace to any one who admits them and toils for their payment. You have your whole life before you, and you have too much good sense to wish that it should be blighted through engaging in a business which justice is sure to punish.

#### DE LA BRIVE

Justice! Ah! You are right, madame, and I certainly would not lend myself to this dangerous comedy, unless your husband had some notes of hand of mine—

#### MME. MERCADET

Which he will surrender to you, sir, I'll promise you that.

## DE LA BRIVE

But, madame, I cannot pay them—

# MME. MERCADET

We will be satisfied with your word, and you will discharge your obligation as soon as you have honestly made your fortune.

## DE LA BRIVE

Honestly!—That will be perhaps a long time to wait.

# MME. MERCADET

We will be patient. And now, sir, go and inform my husband that he must give up this attempt because he will not have your co-operation. (She goes towards the door on the left.)

# DE LA BRIVE

I should be rather afraid to face him—I should prefer to write to him.

MME. MERCADET (pointing out to him the door by which he entered)

You will find the necessary writing materials in that room. Remain there until I come for your letter. I will hand it to him myself.

## DE LA BRIVE

I will do so, madame. After all I am not so worthless as I thought I was. It is you who have taught me this; you have a right to the whole credit of it. (He respectfully kisses her hand.) Thank you, madame, thank you! (He goes out.)

## MME. MERCADET

I have succeeded—if only I could now persuade Mercadet.

Justin (entering from the centre)

Madame-madame-here they are-all of them.

MME. MERCADET

Who?

JUSTIN

The creditors.

MME. MERCADET

Already?—

JUSTIN

There are a great many of them, madame.

# MME. MERCADET

Let them come in here. I will go and inform my husband. (She goes out by one door. Justin opens the other.)

## SCENE FIFTH.

PIERQUIN, GOULARD, VIOLETTE AND SEVERAL OTHER CREDITORS.

GOULARD

Gentlemen, we have quite made up our minds, have we not?

ALL

We have, we have—

PIERQUIN

No more deluding promises.

GOULARD

No more prayers and expostulations.

VIOLETTE

No more pretended payments on account, thrown out as a bait to get deeper into our pockets.

# SCENE SIXTH.

THE SAME PERSONS AND MERCADET.

MERCADET

And do you mean to tell me that you gentlemen are come to force me into bankruptcy?

GOULARD

We shall do so, unless you find means to pay us in full this very day.

MERCADET

To-day!

# PIERQUIN

This very day.

# Mercadet (standing before the fireplace)

Do you think that I possess the plates for striking off Bank of France notes?

## VIOLETTE

You mean that you have no offer to make?

## MERCADET

Absolutely none! And you are going to lock me up?—I warn him who is going to pay for the cab that he won't be reimbursed from any assets of mine.

## GOULARD

I shall add that along with all that you owe me to the debit of your account—

## MERCADET

Thank you. You've all made up your mind, I suppose?

# THE CREDITORS

We have.

# MERCADET

I am touched by your unanimity!—(Pulling out his watch) Two o'clock. (Aside) De la Brive has had quite time enough—he ought to be on his way here.—(Aloud) Gentlemen, you compel me to admit that you are men of inspiration and have chosen your time well!

# PIERQUIN

What does he mean?

# MERCADET

For months, for years, you have allowed yourselves to be humbugged by fine promises, and deceived—yes, deceived by preposterous stories; and to-day is the day you choose for showing yourselves inexorable! Upon my word and honor, it is positively amusing! By all means let us start for Clichy.

GOULARD

But, sir-

PIERQUIN

He is laughing.

VIOLETTE (rising from his chair)

There is something in the wind. Gentlemen, there is something in the wind!—

PIERQUIN

Please explain to us—

GOULARD

We desire to know—

VIOLETTE (rising to his feet)

M. Mercadet, if there is anything—tell us about it.

Mercadet (coming to the table)

Nothing! I shall say nothing, not I—I wish to be put behind the bars!—I would like to see the figure you all will cut to-morrow or this evening, when you find he has returned.

GOULARD (rising to his feet)

He has returned?

PIERQUIN

Returned from where?

VIOLETTE

Who has returned?

Mercadet (coming forward)

Nobody has returned. Let us start for Clichy, gentlemen.

GOULARD

But listen, if you are expecting any assistance—

PIERQUIN

If you have any hope that-

VIOLETTE

Or if even some considerable legacy—

GOULARD

Come, now!

PIERQUIN

Answer—

VIOLETTE

Tell us—

MERCADET

Now, take care, I beg you. You are giving way, you are giving way, gentlemen, and if I wished to take the trouble, I could win you over again. Come now, act like genuine creditors! Ridicule the past, forget the brilliant strokes of business I put within the power of each of you before the sudden departure of my faithful Godeau—

GOULARD

His faithful Godeau!

PIERQUIN

Ah! If there were only-

MERCADET

Forget all that prosperous past, take no account of what might induce him to return—after being waited for so long—and—let us start for Clichy, gentlemen, let us start for Clichy!—

VIOLETTE

Mercadet, you are expecting Godeau, aren't you?

#### MERCADET

No!

VIOLETTE (as with a sudden inspiration)
Gentlemen, he is expecting Godeau!

GOULARD

Can it be true?

PIERQUIN

Speak.

ALL

Speak! Speak!

Mercadet (with feeble deprecations)

Why no, no—yet I do not know—I—Certainly, it is possible that some day or other he may return from the Indies with some—considerable fortune—. (In a decided tone) But I give you my word of honor that I don't expect Godeau here to-day.

VIOLETTE (excitedly)

Then it must be to-morrow!—Gentlemen, he expects him to-morrow!

Goulard (in a low voice to the others)

Unless this is some fresh trick to gain time and ridicule us—

PIERQUIN (aloud)

Do you think it might be?

GOULARD

It is quite possible.

VIOLETTE (in a loud tone)

Gentlemen, he is fooling us.

# MERCADET (aside)

The devil he is! (Aloud) Come, gentlemen, we had better be starting.

#### GOULARD

I swear that—(The rumbling of carriage wheels is heard.)

# MERCADET (aside)

At last! (Aloud) Oh, heavens! (He lays his hand upon his heart.)

A Postillion (outside)

A carriage at the door.

#### MERCADET

Ah! (Falls back on a chair near the table.)

Goulard (looking through the pane of glass above the mantel)

A carriage!

Pierquin (doing the same)

A post-chaise!

VIOLETTE (doing the same)

Gentlemen, a post-chaise is at the door.

# MERCADET (aside)

My dear De la Brive could not have arrived at a better moment!

GOULARD

See how dusty it is!

## VIOLETTE

And battered to the very hood! It must have come from the heart of the Indies, to be as battered as that.

# MERCADET (mildly)

You don't know what you are talking about, Violette! Why, my good fellow, people don't arrive from the Indies by land.

#### GOULARD

But come and see for yourself, Mercadet; a man has stepped out—

# PIERQUIN

Enveloped in a large pelisse—do come—

#### MERCADET

No-pardon me. The joy-the excitement-I-

## VIOLETTE

He carries a chest. Oh! what a huge chest! Gentlemen, it is Godeau! I recognize him by the chest.

## MERCADET

Yes—I was expecting Godeau.

GOULARD

He has come back from Calcutta.

PIERQUIN

With a fortune.

MERCADET

Of incalculable extent!

# VIOLETTE

What have I been saying? (He goes in silence to Mercadet and grasps his hand. The two others follow his example, and then all the creditors form a ring round Mercadet.)

# Mercadet (with seeming emotion)

Oh!—gentlemen—my friends—my dear comrades—my children!—

## SCENE SEVENTH.

THE SAME PERSONS AND MME. MERCADET.

MME. MERCADET (entering from the left)
Mercadet! my dear!

## MERCADET

It is my wife. I thought that she had gone out. She is going to ruin everything!

## MME. MERCADET

My dear!—I see that you don't know what has happened?

#### MERCADET

I? No, I don't—if I—

## MME. MERCADET

Godeau is returned.

# MERCADET

Ah! You say? (Aside) I wonder if she suspects—

# MME. MERCADET

I have seen him—I have spoken to him.—It was I who saw him first.

# MERCADET (aside)

De la Brive has won her over!—What a man he is! (To Mme. Mercadet, low) Good, my dear wife, good! You will be our salvation.

## MME. MERCADET

But you don't understand me, it is really he, it is-

# MERCADET (in a low voice)

Hush! (Aloud) I must—gentlemen—I must go and welcome him.

## MME. MERCADET

No—wait, wait a little, my dear; poor Godeau has overtaxed his strength—scarcely had he reached my apartment when fatigue, excitement and a nervous attack overcame him—

#### MERCADET

Really! (Aside) How well she does it!—

#### VIOLETTE

Poor Godeau!

## MME. MERCADET

"Madame," he said to me, "go and see your husband. Bring me back his pardon; I do not wish to see him face to face, until I have repaired the past."

GOULARD

That was fine.

PIERQUIN

It was sublime.

# VIOLETTE

It melts me to tears, gentlemen, it melts me to tears.

# MERCADET (aside)

Look at that! Well! There's a woman worth calling a wife! (Taking her by the hand) My darling—Excuse me, gentlemen.—(He kisses her on both cheeks. In a low voice) Things are going on finely.

# MME. MERCADET (in a low voice)

How lucky this is, my dear! Better than anything you could have fancied.

#### MERCADET

I should think so. (Aside) It is very much better. (Aloud) Go and look after him, my dear. And you, gentlemen, be good enough to pass into my office. (He points to the left.) Wait there till we settle our accounts. (Mme. Mercadet goes out.)

GOULARD

I am at your service, my friend-

PIERQUIN

Our excellent friend.

VIOLETTE

Friend, we are at your service.

Mercadet (supporting himself half-dazed against the table)

What do you think?—and people said that I was nothing but a sharper!

GOULARD

You? You are one of the most capable men in Paris.

PIERQUIN

Who is bound to make a million—as soon as he has a—

VIOLETTE

Dear M. Mercadet, we will give you as much time as you want.

ALL

Certainly.

MERCADET

That is a little late—but gentlemen, I thank you as heartily as if you had said it yesterday morning. Good-day. (In a low voice to Goulard) Within an hour your stock shall be sold—

### GOULARD

Good!

MERCADET (in a low voice to Pierquin)
Stay where you are. (All the others enter the office.)

PIERQUIN

What can I do for you?

## SCENE EIGHTH.

# MERCADET AND PIERQUIN.

#### MERCADET

We are now alone. There is no time to lose. The stock of Basse-Indre went down yesterday. Go to the Exchange, buy up two hundred, three hundred, four hundred—Goulard will deliver them to you—

# PIERQUIN

And for what date, and on what collateral?

## MERCADET

Collateral? Nonsense! This is a cash deal; bring them to me to-day, and I will pay to-morrow.

PIERQUIN

To-morrow?

MERCADET

To-morrow the stock will have risen.

# PIERQUIN

I suppose, considering your situation, that you are buying for Godeau.

MERCADET

Do you think so?

# PIERQUIN

I presume he gave his orders in the letter which announced his return.

## MERCADET

Possibly so.—Ah! Master Pierquin, we are going to take a hand in business again, and I guess that you will gain from this to the end of the year something like a hundred thousand francs in brokerage from us.

# PIERQUIN

A hundred thousand francs!

## MERCADET

Let the stock be depressed below par, and then buy it in, and—(handing him a letter) see that this letter appears in the evening paper.—This evening, at Tortoni's, you will see an immediate rise in the quotations. Now be quick about this.

PIERQUIN

I will fly. Good-bye. (Exit.)

# SCENE NINTH.

MERCADET, THEN JUSTIN.

# MERCADET

How well everything is going on, when we consider our recent complications! When Mahomet had three reliable friends (and it was hard to find them) the whole world was his! I have now won over as my allies all my creditors, thanks to the pretended arrival of Godeau. And I gain eight days,

which means fifteen, with regard to actual payment. I shall buy three hundred thousand francs' worth of Basse-Indre before Verdelin. And when Verdelin asks for some of that stock, he will find it has risen, for a demand will have raised it above the current quotation, and I shall make at one stroke six hundred thousand francs. With three hundred thousand I will pay my creditors and show myself a Napoleon of finance. (He struts up and down.)

Justin (from the back of the stage)

Sir-

MERCADET

What is it—what do you want, Justin?

JUSTIN

Sir-

MERCADET

Go on! Tell me.

JUSTIN

M. Violette has offered me sixty francs if I will let him speak with M. Godeau.

MERCADET

Sixty francs. (Aside) He fleeced me out of them.

Justin

I am sure, sir, that you wouldn't like me to lose such a present.

MERCADET

Let him have his way with you.

JUSTIN

Ah! sir, but-M. Goulard also-and the others-

MERCADET

Do as you like—I give them over into your hands. Fleece them well!

JUSTIN

I'll do my best. Thank you, sir.

### MERCADET

Let them all see Godeau. (Aside) De la Brive is well able to look after himself. (Aloud) But, between ourselves, keep Pierquin away. (Aside) He would recognize his dear friend, Michonnin.

Justin

I understand, sir. Ah! here is M. Minard. (Exit.)

## SCENE TENTH.

MERCADET AND MINARD.

MINARD (coming forward)

Ah, sir!—

MERCADET

Well, M. Minard, and what brings you here?

MINARD

Despair.

MERCADET

Despair?

MINARD

M. Godeau has come back; and they say that you are now a millionaire!—

MERCADET

Is that the cause of your despair?

MINARD

Yes, sir.

## MERCADET

Well, you are a strange fellow!—I disclose to you the fact of my ruin and you are delighted. You learn that good fortune has returned to me and you are overwhelmed with despair! And all the while you wish to enter into my family!—Yet you act like my enemy—

#### MINARD

It is just my love that makes your good fortune so alarming to me; I fear all the while that you will now refuse me the hand—

#### MERCADET

Of Julie? My dear Adolphe, all men of business have not put their heart in their money-bags. Our sentiments are not always to be reckoned by debit and credit. You offered me the thirty thousand francs that you possessed—I certainly have no right to reject you on account of certain millions. (Aside) Which I do not possess!

## MINARD

You bring back life to me.

## MERCADET

Well, I suppose that is true, but so much the better, for I am very fond of you. You are simple, honorable. I am touched, I am delighted. I am even charmed. Ah! Let me once get hold of my six hundred thousand francs and—(Sees Pierquin enter) Here they come—

# SCENE ELEVENTH.

THE SAME PERSONS, PIERQUIN AND VERDELIN.

MERCADET (leading Pierquin to the front of the stage without perceiving Verdelin)

Is it all right?

Pierquin (in some embarrassment)

It is all right. The stock is ours.

MERCADET (joyfully)

Bravo!

VERDELIN (approaching Mercadet)

Good-day!

MERCADET

What! Verdelin—

VERDELIN

I find out that you have bought the stock before me, and that now I shall have to pay very much higher than I expected; but it is all right, it was well managed, and I am compelled to cry, "Hail to the King of the Exchange, Hail to the Napoleon of Finance!" (He laughs derisively.)

MERCADET (somewhat abashed)

What does he mean?

VERDELIN

I'm only repeating what you said yesterday—

MERCADET

What I said?—

PIERQUIN

The fact of it is, Verdelin does not believe in the return of Godeau—

MINARD

Ah, sir!

MERCADET

Is there any doubt about it?

VERDELIN (ironically)

Doubt about it! There is more than doubt about it. I at

once concluded that this so-called return was the bold stroke that you spoke of yesterday.

## MERCADET

I—(Aside) Stupid of me!

#### VERDELIN

I concluded that, relying upon the presence of this fictitious Godeau, you made purchases with the idea of paying on the rise, which would follow to-morrow, and that to-day you have actually not a single sou—

## MERCADET

You had imagined all that?

# Verdelin (approaching the fireplace)

Yes, but when I saw outside that triumphal post-chaise—that model of Indian manufacture,—and I realized that it was impossible to find such a vehicle in the Champs-Elysées, all my doubts disappeared and—But hand him over the bonds, M. Pierquin!

# PIERQUIN

The-bonds-it happens that-

# MERCADET (aside)

I must bluff, or I am lost!— (Aloud) Certainly, produce the bonds.

# PIERQUIN

One moment—if what this gentleman has said is true—

# MERCADET (haughtily)

M. Pierquin!

## MINARD

But, gentlemen—M. Godeau is here—I have seen him—I have talked with him.

MERCADET (to Pierquin)

He has talked with him, sir-

Pierquin (to Verdelin)

The fact of it is, I have seen him myself.

#### VERDELIN

I don't doubt it!—By the bye, on what vessel did our friend Godeau say he arrived?

## MERCADET

By what vessel?—It was by the—by the Triton—

### VERDELIN

How careless the English newspapers are. They have published the arrival of no other English mail packet but the *Halcyon*.

PIERQUIN

Really!

## MERCADET

Let us end this discussion. M. Pierquin—those bonds—

# PIERQUIN

Pardon me, but as you have offered no collateral, I would wish—I do wish to speak with Godeau.

# MERCADET

You shall not speak with him, sir. I cannot permit you to doubt my word.

# VERDELIN

This is superb.

# MERCADET

M. Minard, go to Godeau—Tell him that I have obtained an option on three hundred thousand francs' worth of stock,

and ask him to send me—(with emphasis)—thirty thousand francs for use as a margin. A man in his position always has such a sum about him. (In a low voice) Do not fail to bring me the thirty thousand.

#### MINARD

Yes, sir. (Goes out, through the right.)

MERCADET (haughtily)

Will that satisfy you, M. Pierquin?

# PIERQUIN

Certainly, certainly. (To Verdelin) It will be all right when he comes back.

VERDELIN (rising from his seat)
And you expect that he will bring thirty thousand francs?

## MERCADET

I have a perfect right to be offended by your insulting doubt; but I am still your debtor—

## VERDELIN

Bosh! You have enough in Godeau's pocket-book wherewith to liquidate; besides, to-morrow the Basse-Indre will rise above par. It will go up, up, till you don't know how far it will go. Your letter worked wonders, and we were obliged to publish on the Exchange the results of our explorations by boring.—The mines will become as valuable as those of Mons—and—your fortune is made—when I thought I was going to make mine.

## MERCADET

I now understand your rage. (To Pierquin) And this is the origin of all the doubtful rumors.

#### VERDELIN

Rumors which can only vanish before the appearance of Godeau's cash

## SCENE TWELFTH.

THE SAME PERSONS, VIOLETTE AND GOULARD.

GOULARD

Ah! my friend!

VIOLETTE (following him)

My dear Mercadet!

GOULARD

What a man this Godeau is!

MERCADET (aside)

Fine!

VIOLETTE

What high sense of honor he has!

MERCADET (aside)

That's pretty good!

GOULARD

What magnanimity!

MERCADET (aside)

Prodigious!

VERDELIN

Have you seen him?

VIOLETTE

Of course, I have!

PIERQUIN

Have you spoken to him?

GOULARD

Just as I speak to you. And I have been paid.

ALL

Paid!

MERCADET

Paid? How-how have you been paid?

GOULARD

In full. Fifty thousand in drafts.

MERCADET (aside)

That I can understand.

GOULARD

And eight thousand francs net, in notes.

MERCADET

In bank-notes?

GOULARD

Bank-notes.

MERCADET (aside)

It is past my understanding. Ah! Eight thousand!—Minard might have given them, so that now he'll bring me only twenty-two thousand.

VIOLETTE

And I—I, who would have been willing to make some reduction—I have been paid in full!

MERCADET

All! (In a low voice to him) I suppose in drafts?

VIOLETTE

In first-class drafts to the amount of eighteen thousand francs.

MERCADET (aside)

What a fellow this De la Brive is!

VIOLETTE

And the balance, the other twelve thousand-

VERDELIN

Yes—the balance?

VIOLETTE

In cash. Here it is. (He shows the bank-notes.)

MERCADET (aside)

Minard won't bring me more than ten.

Goulard (taking a seat at the table)

And this very moment he is paying in the same way all your creditors.

MERCADET

In the same way?

VIOLETTE (taking a seat at the table)

Yes, in drafts, in specie, and in bank-notes.

MERCADET (forgetting himself)

Lord, have mercy upon me! (Aside) Minard will bring me nothing at all.

VERDELIN

What is the matter with you?

MERCADET

Me?—Nothing—I—

## SCENE THIRTEENTH.

THE SAME PERSONS AND MINARD, FOLLOWED BY CREDITORS.

MINARD

I have done your errand.

MERCADET (trembling)

And you—have brought me—a few—bank-notes?

#### MINARD

A few bank-notes?—Of course. M. Godeau wouldn't let me even mention the thirty thousand francs. (Goulard and Violette rise. Minard stands before the table, surrounded by creditors.)

MERCADET

I can quite understand that.

## MINARD

"You mean," he said, "a hundred thousand crowns; here are a hundred thousand crowns, with my compliments!" (He pulls out a large roll of bank-notes, which he places on the table.)

MERCADET (rushing to the table)

What the devil! (Looking at the notes) What is all this about?

MINARD

The three hundred thousand francs.

PIERQUIN

My three hundred thousand francs!

VERDELIN

The truth for once!

# MERCADET (astounded)

Three hundred thousand francs!—I see them!—I touch them!—I grasp them!—Three hundred thousand—where did you get them?

MINARD

I told you he gave them to me.

MERCADET (with vehemence)

He!—He—! Who is he?

MINARD

Did not I say, M. Godeau?

MERCADET

What Godeau? Which Godeau?

MINARD

Why the Godeau who has come back from the Indies.

MERCADET

From the Indies?

VIOLETTE

And who is paying all your debts.

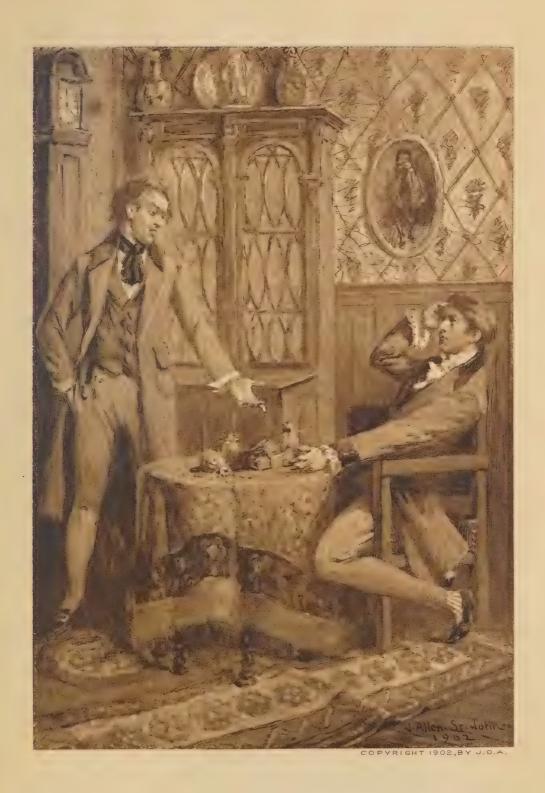
MERCADET

What is this? I never expected to strike a Godeau of this kind.

# PIERQUIN

He has gone crazy! (All the other creditors gather at the back of the stage. Verdelin approaches them, and speaks in a low voice.)

VERDELIN (returning to Mercadet)
It's true enough! All are paid in full!





## , · MERCADET

Paid?—Every one of them?—(Goes from one to the other and looks at the bank-notes and the drafts they have.) Yes, all settled with—settled in full!—Ah! I see blue, red, violet! A rainbow seems to surround me.

# SCENE FOURTEENTH.

THE SAME PERSONS, MME. MERCADET, JULIE (entering at one side) AND DE LA BRIVE (entering at the other.)

## MME. MERCADET

My friend, M. Godeau, feels himself strong enough to see you all.

## MERCADET

Come, daughter, wife, Adolphe, and my other friends, gather round me, look at me. I know you would not deceive me.

#### JULIE

What is the matter, father?

## MERCADET

Tell me (seeing De la Brive come in) Michonnin, tell me frankly—

# DE LA BRIVE

Luckily for me, sir, I followed the advice of madame—otherwise you would have had two Godeaus at a time, for heaven has brought back to you the genuine man.

## MERCADET

You mean to say then—that he has really returned!

## VERDELIN

Do you mean to say that you didn't know it after all?

Mercadet (recovering himself, standing before the table touching the notes)

I,—of course I did. Oh, fortune, all hail to thee, queen of monarchs, archduchess of loans, princess of stocks and mother of credit! All hail! Thou long sought for, and now for the thousandth time come home to us from the Indies!—Oh! I've always said that Godeau had a mind of tireless energy and an honest heart! (Going up to his wife and daughter) Kiss me!

MME. MERCADET (in tears)

Ah! dear, dear husband!

Mercadet (supporting her)

And you, what courage you have shown in adversity!

## MME. MERCADET

But I am overcome by the happiness of seeing you saved—wealthy!—

## MERCADET

But honest!—And yet I must tell you my wife, my children—I could not have held out much longer—I was about to succumb—my mind always on the rack—always on the defensive—a giant might have yielded. There were moments when I longed to flee away—Oh! For some place of repose! Henceforth let us live in the country.

# MME. MERCADET

But you will soon grow weary of it.

# MERCADET

No, for I shall be a witness in their happiness. (Pointing to Minard and Julie.) And after all this financial traffic I shall devote myself to agriculture; the study of agriculture will never prove tedious. (To the creditors) Gentlemen, we will continue to be good friends, but will have no more busi-

ness transactions. (To De la Brive) M. de la Brive, let me pay back to you your forty-eight thousand francs.

DE LA BRIVE

Ah! sir-

MERCADET

And I will lend you ten thousand more.

DE LA BRIVE

Ten thousand francs? But I don't know when I shall be able—

MERCADET

You need have no scruples; take •them—for I have a scheme—

DE LA BRIVE

I accept them.

MERCADET

Ah! It is one of my dreams. Gentlemen (to the creditors who are standing in a row) I am a—creditor!

MME. MERCADET (pointing to the door) My dear, he is waiting for us.

## MERCADET

Yes, let us go in. I have so many times drawn your attention to Godeau, that I certainly have the right to see him. Let us go in and see Godeau!

Final Curtain.



# INDICES



# THE COMÉDIE HUMAINE

### INDICES

THE COMÉDIE HUMAINE as arranged by Balzac is a curious example of subdivision and inter-subdivision. It is composed of some eighty-eight separate stories which, however, are connected—nearly all of them—with the general scheme of the Comédie. This scheme embraces six Scenes and two Studies, as follows:

Scenes from Private Life.

Scenes from Provincial Life.

Scenes from Parisian Life.

Scenes from Political Life.

Scenes from Military Life.

Scenes from Country Life.

Philosophical Studies

Analytical Studies.

The above Scenes or Studies, in turn, are divided into groups including stories which the author desired to connect as intimately as possible. The stories themselves are liable to subdivision, being made up possibly of two or more narratives strung together on the slightest thread under some general title. As an example of this may be cited "The Thirteen," a book composed of three distinct tales,—"Ferragus," "The Duchesse de Langeais," and "The Girl With the Golden Eyes."

Granted that a story were entirely coherent in plot, it was not always or often suffered to lie undisturbed by its restless author. It was wrought upon, both internally and externally. Internally it met with the frequent decapitation or addition of chapter heads. Perchance all the chapters might be merged in one. Perchance some incident lightly dwelt upon might reveal another situation for the

same actors; a budding process would begin, and thus a new story of the Comédie would be born. Externally a story might be changed in title, in grouping, or even in its position in the Comédie; it might lose its identity entirely (in a reverse process to one described above) by being incorporated into another story, in the form of a chapter. All these operations might and did happen in the evolution of the Comédie, which fact explains the difficulty oftentimes experienced in locating tales by the titles given in the earlier French editions; also for the varying number of stories accredited to the Comédie.

The present edition does not give the original grouping in absolute order; this was not possible in a given number of volumes of uniform size. The original grouping has never been considered vital—the author himself was constantly changing it, up to the very day of his death. Nevertheless, the arrangement as finally left by him has been maintained in so far as mechanical convenience would permit. And for those who desire to follow the Balzacian scheme, or to consider a story in relation to its group-mates and the general plan, these Indices have been prepared, showing: (1) Alphabetical Index of stories and their position in the accompanying edition; (2) Titles of Volumes; (3) Original Balzac Scheme.—J. WALKER MCSPADDEN, Publisher's Editor.

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# THE BALZAC PLAN

## OF THE COMÉDIE HUMAINE

The form in which the Comédie Humaine was left by its author, with the exceptions of *Le Député d'Arcis* (incomplete) and *Les Petits Bourgeois*, both of which were added, some years later, by the Édition Définitive.

[On the right hand side is given the original French titles; on the left, their English equivalents. Literal translations have been followed, excepting a few instances where preference is shown for a clearer or more comprehensive English title.]

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AT THE SIGN OF THE CAT AND La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote.

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The Vendetta,

Madame Firmiani,

A Second Home,

Le Bal de Sçeaux.

La Bourse.

 $La\ Vendetta.$ 

Mme. Firmiani.

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#### BOOK 2.

Domestic Peace,
The Imaginary Mistress,
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La Paix du Ménage. La Fausse Maîtresse. Étude de femme.

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Another Study of Woman, La Grande Bretêche, Albert Savarus, Autre étude de femme. La Grande Bretêche. Albert Savarus.

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LETTERS OF TWO BRIDES,

Mémoires de deux Jeunes Mariées.

A Daughter of Eve,

Une Fille d'Ève.

Book 4.

A Woman of Thirty,
The Deserted Woman,
La Grenadière,
The Message,
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La Femme de Trente Ans.

La Femme abandonnée.

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A MARRIAGE SETTLEMENT.
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Colonel Chabert,
The Atheist's Mass,
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THE CELIBATES:

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2. The Vicar of Tours,

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3. A BACHELOR'S ESTABLISHMENT, Un Ménage de Garçon.

Book 13.

PARISIANS IN THE COUNTRY: Les Parisiens en Province:

Gaudissart the Great,

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The Muse of the Department, La Muse du département

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THE JEALOUSIES OF A COUNTRY Les Rivalités:

Town:

The Old Maid,

La Vieille Fille,

The Collection of Antiquities, Le Cabinet des antiques.

BOOK 15.

THE LILY OF THE VALLEY, Le Lys dans la Vallée.

#### Воок 16.

Lost Illusions:—I.,

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à Paris, 1re partie.

#### BOOK 17.

LOST ILLUSIONS:—II.,

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Ève et David.

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Scenes from a Courtesan's Life: Splendeurs et Misères des Cour-

tisanes:

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What Love Costs an Old Man,

A combien l'amour revient

aux vieillards,

The End of Evil Ways,

Ou mènent les mauvais

Chemins.

#### Book 19.

VAUTRIN'S LAST AVATAR,\*

La dernière Incarnation de

Vautrin.

A Prince of Bohemia,

A Man of Business,

Gaudissart II.,

The Unconscious Humorists,

Un Prince de la Bohème.

Un Homme d'affaires.

Gaudissart II.

Les Comédiens sans le savoir.

<sup>\*</sup>The fourth and final part of "Scenes from a Courtesan's Life."

#### Воок 20.

THE THIRTEEN:

Histoire des Treize:

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Ferragus,

The Duchesse de Langeais,

La Duchesse de Langeais,

The Girl With the Golden Eyes, La Fille aux yeux d'or.

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<sup>\*</sup>This book is not numbered, inasmuch as it was included after Balzac's death.

#### COMEDIE HUMAINE

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THE GONDREVILLE MYSTERY,

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Z. Marcas.

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Le Député d'Arcis.

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Les Chouans.

A Passion in the Desert, Une Passion dans le désert.

#### SCENES FROM COUNTRY LIFE

(Scènes de la Vie de Campagne)

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Le Médecin de Campagne.

Воок 31.

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\*Though not included until after the author's death, its exact position had been previously indicated.

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#### PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES

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La Peau de Chagrin.

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THE QUEST OF THE ABSOLUTE,

Christ in Flanders, Melmoth Reconciled.

The Unknown Masterpiece,

La Recherche de l'Absolu.

Jésus-Christ en Flandre.

Melmoth réconcilié.

Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu.

BOOK 35.

THE HATED SON,

Gambara,

Massimilla Doni,

L'Enfant Maudit.

Gambara.

Massimilla Doni.

BOOK 98.

THE MARANAS.

Farewell,

The Conscript,

El Verdugo,

A Seaside Tragedy,

The Red Inn,

The Elixir of Life.

Maître Cornélius.

Les Marana.

Adieu.

Le Réquisitionnaire.

El Verdugo.

Un Drame au bord de la mer.

L'Auberge rouge.

L'Elixir de longue vie.

Maître Cornélius.

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ABOUT CATHERINE DE' MEDICI: Sur Catherine de Médicis:

The Calvinist Martyr,

Le Martyr calviniste,

The Ruggieri's Secret,

The Two Dreams,

La Confidence des Ruggieri.

Les Deux Rêves.

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The Exiles,
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Louis Lambert.

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Séraphita.

#### ANALYTICAL STUDIES.

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